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ABSTRACT

A 2-phase study evaluated the existing reference referral network in California, and developed and evaluated two alternative designs, one organization-based and the other formula-based. The evaluation phase consisted of the following tasks: (1) a survey of all public libraries and cooperative systems of the state regarding their priorities for and perceptions of the network: (2) site visits to three systems and two metropolitan reference centers: (3) an expert evaluation of the accuracy of answers given to a sample of questions drawn from the sites visited: and (4) meetings and discussions with members of the California library community. Following a discussion of the alternative network designs, the report presents an implementation plan based on the organizational model, and provides recommendations for reference performance standards, the funding and structuring of the network, executive staffing, statewide reference training for professionals, and library board activities. Appendices include the library survey, a system survey questionnaire, system and center interviews, reference question evaluation, and suggested statistical report revisions. (Author/RAA)

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California Statewide
Reference Referral Service

Analysis and Recommendations

Prepared for:

California State Library
California Library Services Board

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February 1981

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

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PREFACE

This report presents the major findings and recommendations of a study of the California statewide reference referral network. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the current network and make recommendations for the future of reference referral in the State.

The evaluation phase consisted of surveys of all the public libraries and cooperative systems of the State; visits to three systems and the two metropolitan reference centers; an evaluation of a sample of questions drawn from the five sites visited; and meetings and discussions with members of the California library community. We then developed an organization-based alternative to the current network, and a formula-based alternative. After evaluating the two alternatives we developed recommendations for the future network.

We are particularly grateful for the cooperation of the staff of the systems visited and their member libraries, and the reference centers and their host libraries: North State Cooperative Library System, Jim Kirks, System Coordinator; Peninsula Library System, Jane Light, System Coordinator; Serra Library System, Debra Miller, System Coordinator; the Bay Area Reference Center, Glenda Hooper, Director; and the Southern California Answering Network, Evelyn Greenwald, Director. We are also in debt to the directors of the state's public libraries and the system coordinators who responded to our survey. The staff of the California State Library were also very helpful, particularly Joan Frye of the California Library Services Program Office.

The King Research project staff were Nancy V. DeWath, Eleanor J. Dorsey, Vernon E. Palmour, Kathleen O'Brien, and Warren Bernard. Our consultant on this project was Thomas Childers of the School of Library and Information Science, Drexel University.

King Research, Inc.
October, 1980

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to make recommendations for the improvement of reference referral services within the State of California. Reference referral is the process whereby libraries cooperate to meet the information needs of the State's citizens by referring to one another reference questions not answered in the local library. It makes more effective use of the total information resources of the State by bringing together the requestor and the information from wherever it is available.

King Research, Inc. assessed the needs of the libraries and citizens of the State for reference referral, examined the current network, developed two alternative network designs and evaluated them against the present network, and made recommendations for the future design and funding of the reference referral network.

The needs assessment and evaluation of the current network were performed through a survey of all the public libraries of the State; visits to three Systems and the two metropolitan reference centers; an evaluation of a sample of reference referral questions drawn from the five sites visited; and meetings and discussions with members of the California library community. During the course of this study, two general meetings were held with the library community, one in Sacramento June 18, 1980, and one in Los Angeles August 1, 1980. From the needs assessment and the information that we collected about the current network, we developed goals for the future network and evaluation criteria, which were then used in comparing the alternative designs.

Findings

In the needs assessment, librarians ranked reference referral just behind interlibrary loan as the most important cooperative library activity. Among the possible services of a reference referral network, librarians rated the answering of questions not answered at the local level as by far the most valuable. The current network also provides a range of support services, including training and the development of finding tools and reference aids, aimed at improving the quality of reference service at the local library and throughout the referral network.

The current network is roughly hierarchical, with questions entering the network at the local library and being referred to other resources within the library's CLSA System and then elsewhere in the State. The Systems differ in how they are organized to perform coordinated reference and the extent to which they engage in various reference-related activities. A major part of the current statewide network is the metropolitan reference centers which are not currently State-funded.

The total expenditures on coordinated reference during 1979-80 were about $2.2 million, of which $1.3 million was from CLSA. The rest of the costs were supported by in-kind contributions and from other State, Federal, and local sources.

The network as a whole performs very well on measures of the proportion of referred questions that are actually answered and the accuracy and completeness of the answers provided. There is considerable variation in performance among the Systems, however. The area in which the network is most in need of improvement is turnaround time.

The cost of question-answering within the network varies among the network levels and among the Systems. Questions are answered much more quickly and at a lower cost at the lower levels of the network. The questions that survive to reach the higher levels of the network are the most difficult ones, requiring the greatest time and effort.

The amount and kinds of support services vary throughout the network. Reference support is a valuable network activity because it improves the quality of reference service at every level of the network, reducing the need for referral and increasing the network's efficiency.

Although meeting the reference needs of the underserved is a priority in the CLSA, we found very little network activity aimed specifically at the needs of the underserved. It appears that the information needs of the underserved are more basic than those met by reference referral services or even by reference services generally. We do not feel that the reference referral network is the appropriate place for this program.

Recommendations

In developing recommendations for the future network, we formulated two alternative designs, one formula-based and one organization-based, and evaluated them against the present one. We recommend the adoption of our organization-based design.

Our major recommendations are:

1. The following performance standards should be adopted:
    a. The network must answer completely and correctly at least 95 percent of all the questions referred.
    b. 90 percent of all questions referred must be answered within 2 weeks.
    c. At least 80 percent of the questions referred must be answered within the System's geographical area.
2. Our proposed organization-based design should be adopted. This includes:
    a. The funding and implementation of the statewide reference centers authorized by the CLSA. These should be operated by San Francisco and Los Angeles Public Libraries under contract to the CLSB.

b. The Systems should restructure their reference activity in order to be able to meet the above standards. The primary revision needed in Systems structure is the consolidation of some of the smaller reference centers. The centers to be consolidated will depend on the Systems' ability to meet the performance standards.

c. Access to non-public libraries is to be primarily the responsibility of the statewide and System reference centers. They are to negotiate arrangements with the libraries in their areas.

d. Funds should be allocated to the Systems according to a formula based on population and volume of reference activity. These funds are to be used to support both question-answering and regional reference support activity.

3. A staff person should be added to the CLSA program office within the State Library with responsibility for monitoring and coordinating the performance of the reference referral network and providing information and assistance to the State Librarian as Chief Executive Officer of the CLSB in the area of reference referral.

4. The CLSB should sponsor a statewide reference training effort. This should begin with the addition of a person within the State Library whose responsibility is training, including but not necessarily limited to reference training. A plan for statewide reference training should be developed in consultation with knowledgeable individuals within the California library community. The training may be conducted by the State Library as staff to the Board or by other organizations and individuals within the State under contract to the Board.

5. The Board needs to develop policies on the following topics:

   a. The activities appropriately performed under CLSA reference funding.

   b. The materials acquired with CLSA funds.

6. The Board should authorize further investigation of the following areas:

   a. The kinds of assistance needed by local libraries in meeting the information needs of the underserved.

   b. The most cost-effective communications and delivery systems for the libraries and Systems of the State.

These recommendations would require an increase in CLSA funding from the $1.3 million budgeted for 1981-2 to $2.1 million in 1982-3.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reference referral is one of a number of cooperative activities supported under the California Library Services Act.[1] The Act states that "it is the intent of the Legislature to provide all residents with the opportunity to obtain from their public libraries needed materials and informational services by facilitating access to the resources of all libraries in this state" (section 18702).

The purpose of library cooperation is to make available to the users of one library the collections and services of others, pooling their resources and creating in effect one large distributed library. In addition, several libraries working together enjoy economies of scale, and are able to support specialized collections and services which no one library could justify. Even the largest individual public libraries are able to acquire only a small fraction of the total information resources---published and unpublished information in a variety of formats-- produced each year. At the same time, many of the materials that libraries do acquire each year are used only infrequently.[2] Cooperation gives the patron access to the information that she or he needs, regardless of where it is housed, and makes use of resources that might otherwise be used rarely or not at all.

Cooperation crosses jurisdictional boundaries, however, and so gives rise to problems of coordination and funding. Libraries need to know where the resources are. Then a mechanism is needed for communicating needs and delivering information and materials. Protocols are required to define the responsibilities of each party to the transaction. And, finally, cooperation costs. Libraries are funded by their parent organizations-- local governments, academic institutions, businesses---to serve their own users. A large part of the cost of cooperation is borne by the participating libraries as in-kind contributions. It is their resources that are drawn upon, and their staff who provide much of the effort. To make the best use of all the resources available, however, requires cooperation and coordination too complex to be simply tacked onto the libraries' local operations.

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[1] California Education Code, sections 18700-18767.

[2] Allen Kent and others. A Cost-Benefit Model of Some Critical Library Operations in Terms of Use of Materials. Final Report. University of Pittsburgh, 1978. PB 80-119811.

Since the 1950's and 60's, first the Federal and then state governments have provided coordination and funding for library cooperation that crosses local jurisdictional boundaries.

1.1 Library Cooperation in California

In California, cooperation among public libraries takes place within the public library Systems--currently,[3] 15 cooperative Systems and one single-jurisdiction System. The Systems received their first State support under the 1963 Public Library Services Act (PLSA), which provided funding under a formula based on each System's population and wealth (as measured by assessed valuation), with an adjustment for low population density. The Legislature allocated a fixed amount for the entire PLSA program annually, and each System's share was calculated using the formula. The use of the funds within each System was determined by its member libraries, subject to State approval, and in accordance with the System plan of service and the Geographic Plan for the State.

In 1978, PLSA was superseded by the California Library Services Act (CLSA), which is administered by the California Library Services Board (CLSB). Under CLSA, the Systems engage in interlibrary loan (ILL), communications and delivery, and coordinated reference service support. Each System is mandated to use a "fair and equitable portion" of its reference allowance to improve service to its underserved population. Funding of System planning, coordination, and evaluation is authorized in the Act but this component is presently unfunded.

On the statewide level, the Act authorizes the California Library Services Board, which administers the Act, to establish and administer two or more State reference centers, which have not as yet been funded. The other major statewide program is the development of a statewide computerized bibliographic data base of library holdings, which is currently proceeding.

In addition to public libraries, in California cooperation has developed among libraries of different types. Many of the public library Systems play an important role in intertype cooperation within their geographical areas. Some of the Systems have non-public affiliates, who use and/or are used by the public libraries and the System itself for ILL and interlibrary reference; for example, the North State Cooperative Library System. Other Systems are connected to an intertype network; for example, Black Gold and the Total Interlibrary Exchange (TIE).

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[3] During 1978-79 and 1979-80 there were 15 cooperative and three single-jurisdiction Systems. Long Beach and Los Angeles Public Libraries have consolidated with Metropolitan Cooperative Library System as of 1980-81. The remaining single-jurisdiction System, San Francisco Public Library, plans to consolidate with the Bay Area Library and Information System in 1981-82.

1.2 Reference Referral

The subject of the current study is coordinated reference, also called reference referral, or interlibrary reference (ILR). Reference referral is the process whereby libraries refer to one another reference questions not answered in the local library. It is defined in the California Library Services Act as "the providing of information by one library or reference center to another library or reference center as a result of a user request for information" (Section 18710(h)).

Reference referral can perhaps best be understood in relation to interlibrary loan (ILL) which it closely resembles. In interlibrary loan, the user's information need is translated into a request for a specific document. Directories and union catalogs are used to determine which other libraries might have the identified material. A request is sent to a library judged likely to be able to fill the need, and when it is located the material is sent to the requesting library in the form of a loan or a photocopy.

In interlibrary reference, it is the user's actual question that is relayed. The referring library identifies another library likely to own the kinds of materials useful in answering the request, then tells the receiving library what it is that the user wants. The need is transmitted, not as a request for materials, but as a reference question. The receiving library searches its collection, and possibly other sources, as well, for the requested information, in whatever form. The response may be in the form of a factual answer (e.g., a date, name, address), a photocopy (journal article, page from a reference book), or loan of materials (one or more items on the subject).

Where it suits the user's need, interlibrary reference often makes more effective use of the available resources than does ILL by allowing for a more flexible response from the library to which the request has been referred. If the request is translated into an ILL request, the requested item may be unavailable while an equally good substitute sits on the shelf unused. Or the requested material, once received, may not answer the patron's need after all. Interlibrary reference looks for the answer to the user's question directly, regardless of the form in which it appears.

However, interlibrary reference is more complex and difficult than ILL. For one thing, a high level of staff skill is required in understanding and interpreting the user's need, searching library and non-library resources, evaluating possible answers, and communicating the results to the referring library and to the patron. The determination of where to send the question is more difficult, since a simple finding list such as is used for ILL will not suffice. And, finally, the success of the interlibrary reference transaction is difficult to evaluate. A question may be answered in whole or in part, or the answer may be wholly or partially inaccurate. However, without actually verifying the answer, often neither the user nor the referring librarian can tell whether an answer is complete and accurate. Some questions do not have answers (e.g., "What is the average lifespan of a unicorn?"); or the only answer available is a matter of professional judgment, on which experts may differ; or the question may require information such as legal or medical advice which the librarian cannot ethically provide; or for other reasons it may be difficult to determine whether a question is unanswerable or simply unanswered.

1.3 Reference Referral in California

The public libraries of California have always engaged to some extent in interlibrary reference among themselves and with the State Library. The present complex pattern of interlibrary reference, however, began with the founding of the Bay Area Reference Center (BARC) at San Francisco Public Library in 1967 and the Southern California Answering Network (SCAN) at Los Angeles Public Library in 1968. Each of these centers began as a Federal Library Services and

Construction Act (LSCA) project to provide a local System with access to the rich resources of the metropolitan library. These centers gradually expanded their services to other Systems and libraries in their areas, until now between them they serve the entire State.

During this same period, the Systems under PLSA increased their own reference activity. The System activity continued to develop along with that of BARC and SCAN, so that the effect was that of an initial two-stage hierarchy in which a third, middle stage gradually developed, shifting some of the responsibility from the metropolitan reference centers to the regional level. In addition, other resources, including non-public libraries, were gradually drawn into this developing network, as the libraries sought to tap every possible information source for their users.

Under CLSA, cooperative reference is funded in every System. The initial reference appropriations were based on a per capita and per library formula, as put forth in section 18741(a) of the Act; since then, the funding has been based on line item budget requests submitted to the California Library Services Board. The first year of CLSA, FY1978-79, some Systems supplemented their State appropriations with other one-time locally-available funds; which then formed part of their base-line budgets on which subsequent years' allocations were based.

As noted above, the Act authorizes the Board to establish and administer two or more State reference centers to handle requests that are not met locally or regionally (sections 18760-18764). Each is to provide statewide service. One or more centers are to be designated as respositories for collections especially relevant to economically disadvantaged and non-English-speaking persons (section 18764). The State reference centers have not been implemented.

A simplified diagram of the paths by which questions are referred among the State's public libraries and between public and non-public libraries appears in Figure 1. It is this entire complex of interlocking relationships, formal and informal, that we call the reference referral network. It is important to keep in mind that this is not a unified network, but rather a series of networks of varying formality with varying interconnections.

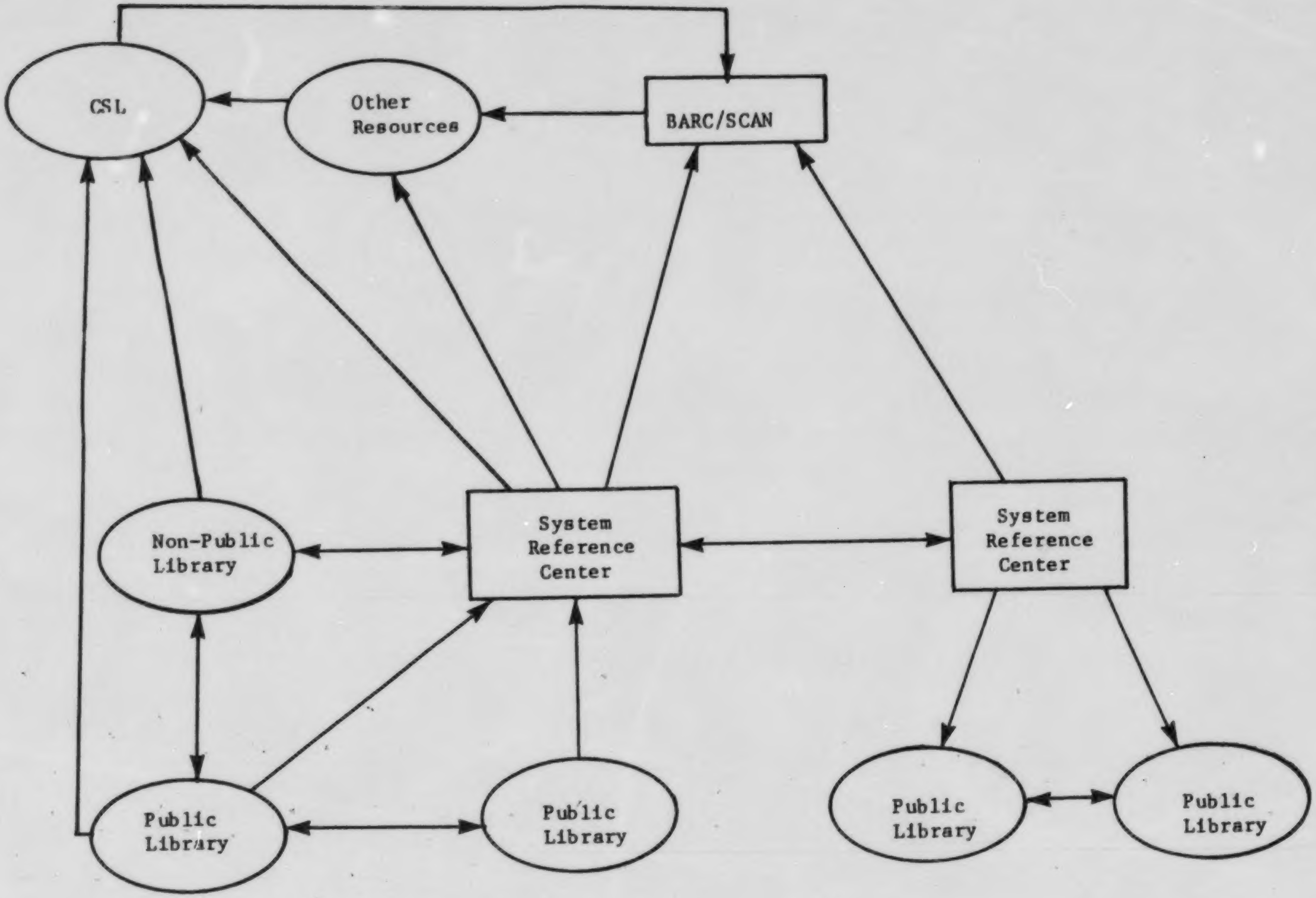

Figure 1. Reference Referral Network

Under the terms of CLSA, the Systems are allowed considerable scope in how they perform reference referral. Figure 1 is a generalized representation. Each of the Systems is different, sometimes radically so. In addition, the network is not controlled from the top down; instead, it functions through persuasion and voluntary cooperation. As a result, it is highly permissive; although some sources place limits on the libraries with which they will deal directly, overall the local public library is free to use whichever sources it deems most appropriate in serving its users.

As the network has developed, it has expanded its range of services beyond simple question-answering. Many of the components of the network have worked to improve the capability of the local library, so that more questions can be answered at the primary level without having to be referred. Some of this has been informal; for example, reference librarians have learned to use non-traditional and non-library information sources from seeing BARC and SCAN do so. Much, however, has been formal: workshops and training sessions; finding tools, which tell the local library where resources are located elsewhere in the state; reference aids, such as newsletters which update standard reference sources with information such as changes in government; and consultation on ways to improve reference in the local library. The network has also filled a much-needed communication function, bringing together librarians with common concerns. In this investigation, we are concerned with all of the functions of the referral network, not just question-answering.

1.4 Previous Studies

Two major studies of public library cooperation in California have been performed. The first, by Martin and Bowler,[4] led to revisions in PLSA. They assessed the current level of public library service within the State and presented a statewide plan. Their plan was for an hierarchical network composed entirely of public libraries: local community libraries, reader subject centers with more exhaustive resources, nine cooperative library Systems, and three "super libraries" in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Sacramento. Stimulation and guidance of the statewide structure would be the responsibility of the California State Library.

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[4] Martin, Lowell A., and Roberta Bowler. Public Library Service Equal to the Challenge of California. Sacramento: California State Library, 1965.

The statewide service activities would include "interlibrary use of resources", that is, universal borrowing, no jurisdictional limits on who may use each library; interlibrary information about resources; interlibrary loan; interlibrary reference; interlibrary communication; and centralized ordering, cataloging, and processing. They recommended an increase in local support to public libraries, and State support for the State Library, library Systems and reader subject centers, the three metropolitan research centers, and local libraries, the last to equalize for low population density and economic ability.

The second major study, by Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, and Co. in 1975,[5] was commissioned after the Legislative Analyst recommended that the PLSA funding formula be reexamined. The purpose of the study was to provide a comprehensive review and evaluation of public library Systems, to review the funding formula, and to propose guidelines for statewide library service for the next decade. Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, and Co. concluded that the Systems had "demonstrated a limited value under adverse circumstances."[6] They were concerned that the costs of cooperative activities were high, although they did find evidence of economies of scale in interlibrary loan and interlibrary reference. They were particularly critical of the quality of reference service in California libraries generally, based on a small sample of questions.

Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, and Co. recommended an hierarchical structure based on regional designated intermediate libraries and a top-level consortium of public and academic libraries plus the State Library. They suggested that State funding be based on volume of activity. Their implementation plan included increased continuing education for library personnel, a planning process for each System to set objectives and measure performance, and an increased leadership role for the State Library.

1.5 The Present Study

The present study is concerned specifically with the reference referral component of CLSA. Its purpose was to assess the needs for reference referral services and to design the most effective means of providing them. We were encouraged not to limit ourselves to the present pattern of service; instead, we were to begin with an examination of the conceptual framework of the service. The questions that we addressed in this study were:

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[5] Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, and Co. California Public Library Systems: A Comprehensive Review with Guidelines for the Next Decade. Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, and Co., 1975.

[6] Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, p. 8-12.

1. What are the reference referral needs of the public libraries of California?
2. How does the current system of reference referral operate?
3. How well does the current system meet the libraries' and users' needs?
4. What system (the current system, or a new design) can best meet these needs? At what cost?

We used a range of techniques to examine the current network. The basic principle was to look at the same things from several different directions, using different tools, each of which has its limitations, but all of which taken together would to some extent correct for one another's shortcomings.

To determine the needs of the libraries and the users of the State and to describe the present network, we undertook the following activities:

1. A review of previous research and existing documentation. A major part of this activity was an analysis of the System budgets and expenditure reports.

2. Survey of all the public libraries of the State. The director of every public library in California received a two-part questionnaire asking (a) his or her opinion of the present network and priorities for reference network services, and (b) statistical information regarding the volume of reference referral activity in each library, turnaround time (elapsed time from when a question is referred until it is answered), and sources of answers to referred questions. One hundred forty-six responses were received,

representing 87 percent of the public libraries in the State. The questionnaire is reproduced and the results are summarized in Appendix A.

3. Survey of all the public library Systems of the State. A questionnaire was sent to each of the State's public library Systems, asking about its operations and the System coordinator's evaluation of the reference referral network. Responses were received from every cooperative System in the State. The questionnaire is contained in Appendix B.

4. Visits to three Systems and BARC and SCAN. Project personnel interviewed System and member library staff at each of three Systems: Serra, Peninsula, and North State. The Systems were chosen in consultation with Library Development Services at the California State Library (CSL) to represent a range of System configurations and populations served. In addition, we visited both BARC and SCAN and interviewed members of their staffs and people in the libraries that housed them. In our System visits, we also asked for opinions of BARC and SCAN. Appendix C contains the interview schedule from which questions for each individual were drawn, and a list of people interviewed.

5. Evaluation of a sample of reference referral requests from the Systems visited and BARC and SCAN. A sample of questions from each of the sites visited was examined in order to determine the kinds of questions referred, the time required for the sending library to receive a reply (turnaround time), and the quality of the answers provided. For each question, copies of the full correspondence between sending and receiving library - usually in the form of TWX messages - was obtained. Appendix D presents the details on the sample and the evaluation for the quality of answers, plus some question examples.

6. Meetings with the library community. Two open meetings were held with the State's library community, one June 18 in Sacramento as we completed the needs assessment, and one August 1 in Los Angeles to discuss the alternatives under consideration.

In the report that follows, Chapter 2 presents our assessment of the needs of the libraries and citizens of the State for reference referral and describes the current network. From our surveys, interviews, and discussions we have put together a portrait of the current network. We found that the network is engaged in two major kinds of activity: question-answering, and reference support services. We discuss the organization and staffing of the network as whole, and then we describe in greater detail how it goes about fulfilling its functions. The questions that Chapter 2 addresses are: What is the current network doing? How?

Chapter 3 evaluates the present performance of the network and develops implications for the future. We discuss the areas in which the network is presently providing good service, and those requiring improvement. We also analyze the costs of the present network for both question-answering and support services, and examine the current network for the factors that contribute to or detract from the cost and quality of service.

In Chapter 4, we turn to the design of alternative network configurations. In order to evaluate alternatives, we must first determine what it is that the citizens and libraries of the State need from the reference referral network, in order to have some criteria against which to judge alternatives. These criteria are presented as goals for the proposed network. We then describe an organization-based and a formula-based design for the network, evaluate them against the present design, and make recommendations.

Chapter 5 is a plan for implementing the recommended design.

Reference referral does not take place in a vacuum. Currently, it is but one System activity of many, others of which are interlibrary loan, delivery, and communication, and often staff development, innovative services to special groups, and other cooperative activities aimed at better meeting the total information needs of the State. Therefore, although our primary focus will be on interlibrary reference we will consider its interaction with other cooperative activities and make recommendations concerning those, as well, as needed.

2. THE CURRENT REFERENCE REFERRAL NETWORK

In this chapter we describe the results of our assessment of the needs of the libraries and citizens of the State, for reference referral, and describe the current network. The needs assessment must take place within the context of the current network. Research in individuals' needs for library services has shown that it is not meaningful to ask them directly what their information needs are and whether they are being met; it is much more useful to ask the advantages and the shortcomings of the current information services available. In this chapter, we present the results of our needs assessment, and describe the current network; in the next, we evaluate how well the current network is meeting those needs.

2.1 Needs Assessment

The needs assessment sought to determine the reference referral needs of the citizens and public libraries of California. This task was accomplished primarily through a survey of all the public libraries in the State. Eighty-seven percent of those surveyed, 146 libraries, completed and returned a mail questionnaire. The questionnaire and the summary responses are contained in Appendix A. The needs assessment was also one of the objectives of the visits to three Systems and the two metropolitan reference centers. In addition, we talked with numerous individual librarians around the State.

The reader should be aware that the needs assessment was from the perspective of the librarians, not the library users. The users of libraries are not in a position to assess reference referral. They are interested in getting answers to their questions, ideally at the local library without the need for referral. The network provides the local library with a further resource to use when its own resources are insufficient.

Reference was ranked second to interlibrary loan in importance among cooperative activities by respondents to the library survey. They cited the following cooperative activities in order of importance:

1. Interlibrary loan
2. Interlibrary reference
3. Interlibrary communications and delivery
4. Universal borrowing/equal access
5. Statewide computerized bibliographic database
6. Staff development and continuing education
7. Cooperative collection development

The two most valuable services of the reference referral network were answering reference questions not answered at the local level and developing finding tools, e.g., directories and union catalogs. Librarians stated that in question-answering a reference referral network should first be able to answer a high proportion of questions; secondly, it should provide high-quality answers; third, it should have rapid turnaround time; and finally, the referral network should be easy to use.

The public librarians are basically satisfied with the current reference referral network, with the only major complaint having to do with the slow turnaround time. The current network is perceived as providing high-quality service, including thorough answers to questions received.

Figure 2 highlights the findings of the survey of public libraries.

2.2 Functions of the Current Network

The California Library Services Act authorizes each System to receive "an annual allowance for the improvement and maintenance of coordinated reference service support to the members of the system" (section 18741(a)). Reference funds are to be used for "general and specialized reference collection development, employment of reference specialists, and system-wide reference training" as well as to "improve the system's reference service to its underserved population through appropriate collection development, provision of reference specialists, and staff training" (section 198741(b)).

In this section, we will briefly define direct reference and indirect reference. A basic understanding of the functions performed by the network is

Priorities among cooperative activities, generally

1. Interlibrary loan
2. Interlibrary reference
3. Interlibrary communications and delivery
4. Universal borrowing/equal access
5. Statewide computerized bibliographic data base
6. Staff development and continuing education
7. Cooperative collection development

Most valuable possible services of reference referral network

1. Answering reference questions not answered at local level
2. Developing finding tools (such as union lists, directories)
3. Developing reference aids-(such as indexes, bibliographies, updates)
4. Providing staff development and continuing education in reference
5. Performing online searches of bibliographic data bases
6. Providing bibliographic verification for ILL

Most valuable reference services provided by current systems

1. Answering reference questions
2. Acting as liaison with BARC, SCAN, other systems
3. Providing funds for purchase of materials
4. Providing coordination and communication among reference staffs of member libraries
5. Providing staff development and continuing education in reference

Most valuable services provided by BARC, SCAN

BARC	SCAN
1. Answering reference questions	1. Answering reference questions
2. Staff development/continuing education	2. Developing reference aids
3. Developing reference aids	3. Developing finding tools
4. Information about, access to special libraries	4. Newsletter
5. Newsletter	5. Online searching

Importance of characteristics of reference referral network

1. *Proportion* of questions answered and *quality* of answers (tied)
2. Rapid *turnaround* time
3. *Ease* of use

Major praise for current network

1. Quality of services, generally
2. Thoroughness of answers to questions

Major complaint

Turnaround time

SOURCE: King Research, Inc. Library Survey, 1980
NOTE: See Appendix A for questionnaire and detailed results.

Figure 2
King Research, Inc.
California Statewide Reference Referral Survey
Key Results

useful in the sections that follow, which outline the organization, communications, and staffing within the network. After we have described the network, we will return to a more in-depth discussion of these functions, and evaluate how well the current network is performing them. We cannot emphasize too strongly that any evaluation of the current network - including of its organization, communications, and staffing - has to be based on how well it provides the services needed by the libraries and citizens of the State.

The reference referral network engages in a number of cooperative reference activities. These activities can be divided into two kinds: direct reference, the answering of questions not answered at the local library; and reference support or indirect reference, the goal of which is to improve the question-answering capability of the local library.

2.2.1 Question-Answering

Many questions that cannot be answered at one library can be answered at another that is larger or has more specialized resources. In its simplest form, interlibrary reference consists of one library sending a reference question to another, which the receiving library's reference staff then researches, reporting their findings to the referring library.

In our survey of all the public libraries of the State, respondents overwhelmingly rated question-answering as the most valuable reference service of the network as a whole, as well as of their local Systems and of BARC and SCAN.

Most Systems have at least one library designated as a System reference center with staff whose responsibility it is to answer questions referred to them by other System libraries. In addition, BARC and SCAN provide back-up reference from the San Francisco and Los Angeles Public Libraries, respectively. These reference centers provide several services to the referring libraries:

1. Access to the resources of the host library. To make the maximum use of all of the resources of a given library requires staff on the spot who know the library and are able to search through all possible resources, not only the collection (which is accessible through interlibrary loan) but special files and indexes, reference works, uncataloged ephemera, and so forth.

2. Staff time. The reference center staff are often able to spend more time on a question than can the public service staff. Even the library that houses the reference center may refer questions, on occasion, to the center staff who may have more time to search the local collection as well as sources outside the library itself.

3. Expertise. The reference center staff every day answer complex questions such as a desk librarian might see only once in a while. The desk librarian, on the other hand, may have many other responsibilities besides question-answering. The reference center staff are specialists whose skills are available to the referring libraries.

4. Filtering and switching. The reference centers know the capabilities of the other components of the network and of the non-library resources in their areas. They interface between the local library and these sources, ensuring that the question that is referred is complete and clear, that local resources have been exhausted, that the question is sent to the most appropriate source, and that the answer received is adequate. Because they deal with reference referral every day the centers are more skilled at this than the local libraries for which referral may be an infrequent occurrence.

2.2.2 Reference Support

In addition to handling reference questions, various components of the reference referral network engage in formal and informal activities aimed at improving the question-answering capabilities of the other components. Improved question-answering at the local and regional levels can reduce the total volume of reference referral activity while providing more prompt answers to users. In addition, many unanswered questions are nevertheless not referred; improved capabilities at the local level will mean fewer unanswered queries, overall.

Indirect reference support activities performed by the current network include:

1. Training:
   - In basic reference skills;
   - In more advanced reference skills, including specialized subject areas;
   - In using the referral network;
   - Of trainers;

2. Creation of finding tools, such as directories and union lists, that help the librarian to find the most appropriate referral source;

3. Creation of reference aids, such as indexes and bibliographies, that help the librarian to find the needed information, in his or her own collection or another;

4. Coordination and communication, including:

   - The publication of newsletters;
   - The organization of committees, task forces, and other action groups;

- Liaison among components of the network, such as between local libraries and BARC and SCAN;
- Coordination of access to special resources, such as non-public libraries;
- Coordination of collection development.

5. Augmentation of the collection of member libraries; i.e., funding the acquisition of reference and circulating materials that are of use in answering reference questions.

2.2.3 Allowable Funded Reference Activities

No formal policies exist concerning what are and are not allowable expenditures under the reference component of CLSA. It is necessary, however, to define the limits of the program, in order to differentiate it from other CLSA programs and to define for the Systems the kinds of activities appropriate under this component.

The CLSA defines interlibrary reference as "the providing of information by one library or reference center to another library or reference center as a result of a user request for information" (section 18710(h)). Activities under the reference program, therefore, must directly or indirectly support this function. There are two key elements to this definition: 1) it specifies that one institution is serving another, and serving users only indirectly; therefore, we recommend that services directly to the user be disqualified from this program; 2) the action is a result of a user request for information, that is, a reference question. Activities directed more generally at information-provision - which, after all, is the goal of all library activity - do not qualify. Activities that support the interlibrary reference capability, either by improving the quality of interlibrary reference service, or by reducing the need for interlibrary reference - are allowable.

In reviewing the System budgets and expenditure reports, and their survey responses, we found that as far as we could tell from the documentation available, the Systems are currently using their reference funds appropriately. The only activities reported to us which fall outside of our definition of appropriate activities are a community analysis project in Santiago, and an after-hours reference service for patrons in BALIS. Both of these appear to be worthwhile programs in themselves; however, they are not appropriately funded under this program. The cost of these two programs is small relative to the total appropriations.

2.3 Organization

The current reference referral network consists of a series of interlocking relationships of varying degrees of formality, within and among Systems and between Systems and local libraries and other information resources, including the metropolitan reference centers (the Bay Area Reference Center (BARC) at San Francisco Public Library and the Southern California Answering Network (SCAN) at Los Angeles Public Library); participating non-public libraries; the California State Library; and other information resources (see Figure 1). Currently, the network is primarily a public library network, although some non-public libraries participate.

The existing network developed in a disjointed fashion, with various parts of it forming and then linking. Although the California State Library and, more recently, the California Library Services Board, have over the years provided some guidance through the allocation of Federal Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) and California Library Services Act (CLSA) funds, and a geographical plan was developed that created boundaries for System areas,[1] in general the network developed without any central guidance or plan. It is still highly decentralized.

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[1] California Library Association. Master Plan for Libraries In California, Berkeley, Ca.: CLA, 1962.

The network is roughly hierarchical. A question enters the network at the local library, which we have termed the first, or primary, level of reference service. Unanswered questions are usually referred to the System, or secondary level. Most, but not all, Systems have some form of a System reference center; that is, one or more System libraries are designated to receive questions from other libraries.

Within the Systems, the referral network may be of any of the following patterns (illustrated in Figure 3):[2]

1. Star: this is a centralized network, in which all questions are referred to one library within the System. An example of this is Black Gold, where all questions go to the information center.

2. Multiple star: the System has more than one resource library. Each library is assigned to a resource library, which in turn refers to the tertiary level. There may be interchange among the resource libraries, as well, but they are co-equal. An example of this is North State, with three resource centers.

3. Hierarchical: a question from one library goes to an intermediate reference center within the System, which in turn passes on unanswered questions to another library within the System, at a higher level in the hierarchy, before questions are referred outside of the System. An example of this is Mountain Valley, where questions go first to an area library and then to the information center (which also functions as an area library for some System members).

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[2] Adapted from Allen Kent, "Network Anatomy and Network Objectives," in Allen Kent and Thomas J. Galvin, eds., The Structure and Governance of Library Networks, New York: Marcel Dekker, 1979; p. 3-18.

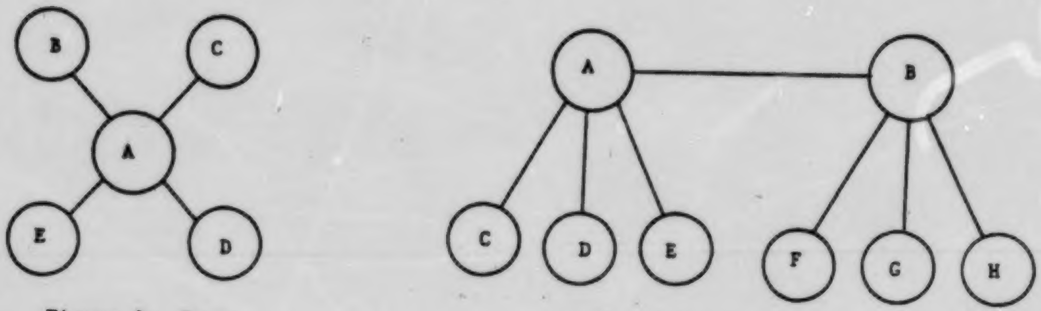

Figure 3a. Star

Figure 3b. Multiple Star

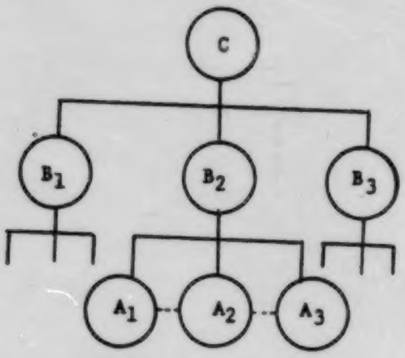

Figure 3c. Hierarchical

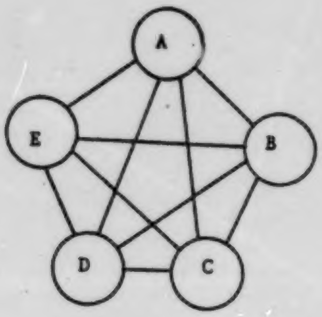

Figure 3d. Distributed

Figure 3. Referral Network Designs

4. Distributed: all System members are co-equal, and refer questions to one another and outside of the System, with no one library pre-eminent. BALIS follows this design.

For simplicity, we will always refer to the System as the secondary level, regardless of whether there are multiple levels within the System itself.

It is important to note that most Systems' reference referral paths represent variations on these pure types. The individual System designs have developed in response to the needs and capabilities of the member libraries. The geography of each System also plays a part, since reference referral often requires the delivery of requests (where TWX is not available) and of materials. Furthermore, interlibrary reference and interlibrary loan are often intertwined at the System level, with a resource library acting as a center for both, so a given design may be based on both the ILR and ILL capabilities needs of the System.

The tertiary level of the network consists of the metropolitan reference centers, BARC (the Bay Area Reference Center) at San Francisco Public Library and SCAN (Southern California Answering Network) at Los Angeles Public Library. These are projects of these two libraries which provide specialized reference staff who use the host collections, other libraries, and non-library resources to answer the questions not answered at the System level. They are supported by Federal Library Services and Construction Act demonstration funds.

SCAN accepts questions only from System reference centers, or, in the case of Los Angeles Public Library and Los Angeles County Library, regional branches. BARC also encourages local libraries to submit questions through their System centers.

In addition to these three major components, many other libraries and information sources participate in the network. Many System reference centers refer questions to and receive questions from non-public (academic and special) libraries in their geographic area. BARC and SCAN have reciprocal arrangements with special libraries in their areas. The California State Library accepts requests from all libraries and reference centers around the State, and is a major information-provider.

Because the network is permissive, the local library may generally refer questions to any source that will accept them. Some sources, like SCAN and many of the special libraries that cooperate with SCAN and BARC, will not accept questions directly from local libraries. In practice, however, local libraries that belong to Systems with System reference centers refer virtually all their unanswered questions there, except for questions for which they believe they can find the answer more readily elsewhere; for example, from a local historical society. The System reference centers draw on a great diversity of resources, but when they cannot identify a more appropriate resource they send their questions to BARC and to SCAN. The State Library is used heavily, but primarily for questions in the subject areas in which it has special competence, such as government documents and Californiana.

2.3.1 Non-Public Libraries

The core of the CLSA program is public libraries, but non-public libraries also participate formally in the reference referral network in a number of ways. Some Systems have non-public libraries as affiliated members. More frequently, public and non-public libraries in a System's geographical area are brought together within a separate organization, an intertype cooperative network governed separately from the System. A few Systems have no formal intertype cooperative arrangements, although the System may interact with individual libraries; for example, BALIS has no non-public members or network, but it does have a contract with UC Berkeley for database searching. Table 1 shows the Systems and their affiliations with non-public libraries.

TABLE 1. COOPERATIVE LIBRARY SYSTEMS' AFFILIATIONS WITH NON-PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Systems		
With Associated Intertype Networks (Network Name)	With Affiliated Non-Public Libraries	With No Non-Public Library Affiliates
Serra (METRO)	49-99	South State
Black Gold (TIE)	MVLS	MCLS
49-99 (CAL)	North Bay	BALIS
Inland (SIRCULS)	North State	
MOBAC (CIN)		
Peninsula (CIN)		
South Bay (CIN)		
SJVLS (AWLNET)		
Santiago (LOCNET)		

Non-public libraries participate in the reference referral network in other ways than through Systems and intertype cooperatives. For example, many special libraries have arrangements with BARC and SCAN for reference services. The special libraries are not willing to accept requests from any and all libraries but will accept them from BARC and SCAN. Others have no formal ties with neighboring libraries but answer questions for them on occasion.

The financial arrangements between Systems and non-public libraries also vary. In METRO (the network associated with Serra), the network pays for a full-time staff member at UC San Diego who spends half of his or her time on network activities and the other half working for the host library, as compensation. In the same network the staff member at San Diego State spends full time on network activity; the host library is not compensated for its participation.

Most intertype cooperation began with demonstration funds from LSCA. With the transition from PLSA to CLSA, the funding for the network-affiliated Systems took into account their intertype activities.

In interlibrary reference, the non-public libraries represent a generally untapped source. They are much more heavily used for interlibrary loan. ILL is a much more straightforward transaction: the borrowing library identifies a non-public library as a possible lender of wanted materials, and asks for them; the item is on the shelf or not, is sent or not. Academic and special libraries usually engage in a large volume of ILL with other libraries. The ALA Interlibrary Loan Code governs such exchanges and defines the protocols to be followed by both parties to the exchange.

Interlibrary reference is more complicated because it is more labor-intensive. It requires either that the non-public library devote considerable professional staff time in actually answering the question, or that it open its doors to a staff person from a System or network to search for the answer in its collection. It is not codified, and there is no common set of procedures to be followed.

Because no statewide mechanisms exist for encouraging and structuring intertype reference, network arrangements with non-public libraries have proceeded on a library-by-library basis. In some areas, certain individuals - library directors, systems coordinators, and so forth - have devoted the time and effort required to make contact and nurture intertype relationships. Some non-public libraries are reluctant to participate in reference referral, seeing it as costly but with little benefit for them; a major academic library, for example, sees little benefit to it in cooperating with a medium-sized public library.

Intertype cooperation has been advocated strongly within California especially since at least the early 1970's. However, we found that it is only very strong in areas where System or network staff bear the burden of searching out information on behalf of the other cooperating libraries and take the initiative to create and maintain intertype ties.

2.4 Communication

In reference referral, the question must be communicated from the originating library to the reference center and on through the network and the reply - which may be information or materials - back to the originating library for the patron. The methods of communication used within the network are, roughly in order of use, TWX, System delivery van, telephone, mail, and UPS. Most of the major libraries of the State have TWX machines, used for ILL and ILR. Every System has a delivery system of some sort, generally with daily delivery in urban areas and twice or thrice-weekly delivery in rural areas. The telephone is used, especially on rush requests, but since it does not provide a written copy of the transaction, many Systems prefer that libraries use one of the other methods.

System communication and delivery is a separately-funded component of the CLSA program. Interlibrary loan, interlibrary reference, and system planning and coordination all use the communication and delivery channels. In most Systems, the CLSA communication and delivery funds are used to support TWX machines in members' libraries, which are used for communication within the System and between the System and the rest of the network, and for a truck-type delivery service within the System.

A Statewide communication and delivery program between and among Systems, state reference centers, independent public libraries, and other libraries participating in CLSA programs is authorized under section 18766 of the California Library Services Act, but has not yet been funded.

2.5 Staffing

The reference referral network is staffed with reference specialists who receive, answer, and re-refer questions, and who provide the various reference support services. Among the various components of the network, staffing varies according to the extent to which the referral staff devote their time to network reference activities, who supervises them, and their level of responsibility.

Within the library that houses the reference center, referred questions may be answered by the library staff generally, or by individuals designated specifically to handle referred requests. In the first case, the library is compensated for the staff time required. In the latter case, the people handling the referral activities may administratively belong to the host library (on their payroll and/or selected through the library's civil service) or they may be System or center employees with no formal ties to the host library.

The usual pattern among the Systems is for there to be System staff who are responsible for System referrals, but there are still some instances of the other, for example, in North Bay. BARC and SCAN staff are assigned full-time to the reference center, but they are legally employees of their host libraries and are governed by their civil service regulations. This severely limits the centers in their hiring; only under very unusual circumstances are they able to go outside of the library to fill vacant positions. This does mean that their librarians are experienced with the library system within which they function, but it also means that the center's choice of personnel is constrained by who is available and interested in a transfer. The center directors report to the administration of their respective libraries, but function independently.

Where there are specific reference center staff, they still may not spend all of their time on referral activities. They may put in some time on the public desk, for example. This may be seen as a way of compensating the host library for housing the reference center which uses their resources, or for library staff who also perform interlibrary reference when the center staff is unavailable or overloaded, for example. The proper amount of time for reference center staff to spend on non-network reference activity is debatable, so there is a potential for the host library to make excessive demands on the network staff's time.

Generally, the professional System reference staff can be classified into one of two positions: reference librarian, or reference coordinator. Reference librarians' major responsibility is answering questions, although they often spend some part of their time on reference support activities. Reference coordinators have wider responsibilities for reference within the System as a whole. In addition to question-answering (to which most of them devote at least part of their time), they may also conduct training, consult with member libraries on reference, engage in cooperative collection development, and have other responsibilities that relate to improving the level of reference service within the System.

The unusual position of reference center staff housed within a member library can create supervision problems. They may be supervised by the host library's own reference staff; this is particularly true when they have a low level of responsibility, for example, when they are reference librarians and not reference coordinators. They may, however, be supervised by other center or System staff: the System coordinator or System reference coordinator, where such exists. If the System is geographically large it may not be feasible for the System coordinator to directly supervise all the System staff. Under some circumstances the reference center staff may have reporting relationships with both the host library and the System, officially or in actual practice. These confused and conflicting reporting relationships can create conflicting demands on the referral staff.

Because there is no consistency across the State in the way in which System and metropolitan reference center staff are hired or in their job titles, there is also no consistency in what they are paid. Salaries are a function of the individuals' classifications and the practices of the System or local jurisdiction to which they are attached.

The major requirement for System reference and BARC and SCAN personnel is that they have reference expertise. Among the Systems and centers, only SCAN employees have formal subject specialties. The reason for this is that the LAPL central library is highly subject-specialized. The division of responsibility among the SCAN staff reflects that within the library itself. BARC and SCAN also have staff specifically assigned to indirect reference activities (workshop coordinator, liaison with special libraries). The Systems staff are hired for their direct reference skills, primarily, although most also have reference support responsibilities.

3. EVALUATION OF CURRENT NETWORK

This chapter discusses our evaluation of the current reference referral network. The question-answering service is assessed in terms of its effectiveness followed by an assessment of the effectiveness of reference support services. The final part of the chapter discusses the cost of the reference referral service.

3.1 Question-Answering Services

Within the reference referral network, direct reference consists of the answering of questions unanswered at the local library. In the library survey, respondents told us that by far the most important function of the reference referral network was question-answering, although they did value its reference support activities, as well. (See Figure 2.)

3.1.1 Kinds of Questions Referred

The policy within the reference referral network is that all questions are created equal: any unanswered reference question is referrable, and all questions are pursued to the full extent of the network's capabilities. The exceptions are one category of questions, i.e., bibliographic verification questions, which are defined as interlibrary loan and discussed below, and certain types of questions that are not referrable for ethical or practical reasons: examples include questions requiring legal or medical advice; lengthy genealogical or patent searches; the preparation of comprehensive bibliographies; and contest questions. Otherwise, the secondary and tertiary referral centers will attempt any question that the local library refers. Local libraries, for their part, will generally refer any question that the network will accept.

A corollary policy to this one of referring all unanswered questions is that all questions deserve an answer, whatever that entails. Once a question is referred, the various components of the network will pursue it until an answer is found, or it is determined that no answer is possible, or the librarian at the originating library cancels the request. The only exceptions are questions with a firm deadline, that is, a date after which the patron cannot use the information, in which case the search ceases on that date.

Although we speak of these as policies, it is perhaps more accurate to call them norms under which the network operates. These norms pre-existed the CLSB. No one promulgated them as policies. Their origin seems to have been with BARC and SCAN, whose dedication to ferreting out the answer to the more difficult question from the most obscure source set the model for the rest of the network as it developed. Before that, other libraries, including the California State Library as a service-provider, provided equally high-level service. But it was from frequent contact with BARC and SCAN that most of the libraries in the State seem to have acquired these as norms for network activity and for reference service generally. The result of requiring such a high level of service for all questions is higher costs.

Some of the individuals whom we interviewed questioned these policies, on the grounds that not all questions may be worth the cost of tracking down a particularly elusive answer. The usual response to this objection, however, on the part of participants in the network, was that the librarian is not able to judge the value of the information to the client. Although in some cases the patron's reason for needing the information is stated, often it is not; and one cannot judge from the question itself the significance of that information for the individual.

To reduce the level of service, however, requires a decision rule for the librarian to determine what level of service to give to each unanswered reference question. In some other states the approach is to limit the responsibility of the network. In Wisconsin, for example, the cap of their network, WILS, is a staff member at a University of Wisconsin library. Her responsibility is to attempt to answer the question from that library's collection. If she cannot, the question is returned to the local library. The local library may choose to continue the search by contacting other sources, but the network's responsibility is finished. In California, in contrast, the various components of the network interpret their responsibility as finding the answer to the question, wherever. About 60 percent of the questions that BARC answers are answered with sources outside of the San Francisco Public Library.

The extent to which the network will go to answer reference questions requires a policy decision about the level of service to be provided. It requires a value judgment about whether the high quality of service currently provided is worth its cost. The public library directors of the State, in responding to our library survey, set a high standard for the level of service to be provided: they wanted 95 percent of the questions referred to be answered completely and correctly. Several of the judges in our reference question evaluation, who were chosen for their reference expertise, praised the California network for its thoroughness. And in our discussions around the State librarians repeatedly told us that one of the major benefits of the network is that they can assure patrons that if there is an answer, it will be found.

If the decision is made to reduce network costs by reducing the level of service, this can be done in several ways:

1. Eliminate the highest level of the network. This would mean that the most difficult questions would not be answered. It would reduce both the total costs and the level of service offered.

2. Follow the Wisconsin model of limiting the search to library resources. This would probably reduce costs overall, although it would increase costs for some questions for which the most direct course is to go to a non-library resource. It is not compatible with the current philosophy of the library as the provider of all kinds of information, not just document-related information.

3. Set a limit on the amount to be spent (most easily expressed in terms of staff time) on each question. All searching would stop at that point.

4. More narrowly define the kinds of questions that are acceptable, to reduce the total load on the network. This is the least practical alternative and the one whose effect is the least predictable.

From our discussions with the California library community, we conclude that none of these alternatives would be welcome. The librarians, on behalf of their clients, generally value highly the current level of service and would resist any reduction.

3.1.1.1 Bibliographic Verification

One kind of question excluded from the network by policy is bibliographic verification. Bibliographic verification is an essential part of interlibrary loan, and it has been the policy of the State Library that verification is an interlibrary loan function and a local library responsibility.

Verification has two components to it. First, the requesting library must ascertain the full bibliographic description for the material under prevailing cataloging standards. Verification of the main entry is particularly important. The bibliographic description has to be communicated to other libraries according to prevailing standards so that all parties to the ILL transaction can be sure that they are referring to the same unique item. The main entry is that part of the bibliographic description —usually the author, editor, or title— under which the item is cataloged, and therefore under which a loaning library will look in its own catalog to see if it owns the requested item. This verification is usually accomplished using one or more standard printed bibliographic tools, such as the National Union Catalog (NUC), which many but not all libraries own. Another tool being used increasingly is bibliographic utilities, time-shared computer systems whose databases consist of the cataloging records of the Library of Congress and of numerous participating libraries.

The second component of verification is to determine which libraries own an item. NUC lists some but by no means all the libraries in the country that own a given item. A multitude of other union lists and finding tools are used, as well.

In California, the developing statewide bibliographic database contains holdings information for California libraries. Currently, two microfiche lists, CATALIST and CULP, contain holdings information from the database for monographs and periodicals, respectively. Neither is a complete list of all the libraries in the State; CATALIST in particular is still incomplete. As part of this program, the State is partially subsidizing libraries to join bibliographic utilities, which will in time increase both the number of California records available on them and the number of libraries and Systems with access to them for verification as well as other purposes.[1]

Verification is the function where interlibrary loan and reference meet. Difficult verifications often require the skills of a reference librarian. Among many California public libraries, little differentiation is made between ILL and ILR. As a request moves through the referral network, however, ILL and ILR become increasingly differentiated, until at sources such as BARC, SCAN, and the State Library, loan and reference requests are completely separate.

The difficulty with assigning verification to the local level, however, is that many libraries lack the tools to perform more than the most basic verification. There are distinct economies of scale in sharing bibliographic tools among libraries, as well as in sharing the expertise of staff members who perform involved verifications.

Because the Systems perform both ILL and reference referral, we found that most System reference staff are to some extent engaged in bibliographic verification. Where the ILL staff are entirely clerical, in particular, they occasionally need the assistance of the professional reference staff on some of their more complicated requests.

Because there are economies of scale in sharing the resources required to perform bibliographic verification, it is an appropriate area for cooperation, and is therefore an appropriate System activity. Whether it is defined as an ILL or ILR function is a policy decision. To a certain extent, the lines drawn between cooperative programs are arbitrary, and verification straddles the ILL-ILR line.

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[1] Recommended Long Range Design for CLSA Statewide Data Base Support to Public Library Resource Sharing. Staff Report. January, 1980.

The cost data reported in Section 3.4, below, include such bibliographic verification as is now performed under the reference component of System activities. We estimate that about 10 percent of total reference expenditures are currently for bibliographic verification. Because we did not study interlibrary loan, we have no estimate of the amount of bibliographic verification now being performed at either the System or local library level and supported from other sources, so we cannot estimate the total volume and costs of interlibrary loan verification or the impact of including verification within the coordinated reference component of CLSA.

3.1.1.2 Other Bibliographic Questions

In addition to bibliographic verification, the California Database and bibliographic utilities can be used to answer another group of bibliographic questions, questions which are referred through the network. These questions are of two kinds: questions concerning the identification of a specific bibliographic item, and those asking for one or more books on a general topic or by a specific author.

As part of our study, we drew a sample of 236 questions from those already answered by each of the Systems visited and BARC and SCAN. For each question, we obtained as complete as possible a written record of the transaction: the request as it was submitted to the reference center, the reply sent to the referring library, and any other communications (requests for clarification, status reports, etc.). A professional librarian rated each question according to whether it could have been answered by using a bibliographic utility with 1) author-title access, and 2) subject access. If the referring library could readily locate these materials it would not have to send the request to the reference center. Not all bibliographic utilities have the same capabilities, however. The ones active in California are OCLC, which can only be searched by author and title, and RLIN, which can also be searched by Library of Congress subject heading.

The results are presented in Table 2. The Systems get a much larger proportion of questions that could have been answered with a bibliographic utility than do the tertiary referral centers - as many as 38 percent of the requests

TABLE 2. EFFECT OF BIBLIOGRAPHIC UTILITY ON REFERRAL QUESTIONS

System/Center (No. of Questions)	Percent of Questions Referring Library Could Have Answered with a Bibliographic Utility	
	Author/Title Access	Subject Access
BARC (50)	0%	10%
SCAN (50)	4	8
North State (50)	20	32
Peninsula (36)	14	25
Serra (50)	14	38
All (236)	10	22

SOURCE: King Research, Inc. Reference Question Sample.

in the Serra sample could have been answered with subject access to a union file of library holdings, for example. These kinds of requests are probably screened out at the System level, which is why BARC and SCAN receive so few of them.

We can conclude that the development of the California database and the introduction of bibliographic utilities to libraries in California will have a major effect on reference referral. If every library in the State were to acquire a terminal for a bibliographic utility with full author, title, and subject access, the reduction in ILR referrals from the local to the System level could be as high as about 30 percent. Actually, not all libraries will acquire terminals and many will be joining OCLC, which does not currently have subject access. We estimate that at the end of the three year phase-in period the number of ILR requests referred by local libraries will be reduced about 10 percent with the availability of bibliographic utilities.

3.1.1.3 Imputed Purpose of Questions Referred

In describing the current network, we were interested in the kinds of questions that are actually referred through the network. Rather than describing them according to subject, which is traditional, we decided to classify them according to the user's imputed purpose in asking the question. This would give us a general idea of the role that the network serves in meeting the information needs of the citizens of the State. We wanted to begin to answer the questions, "What utility do the questions answered by the reference centers have for the end user? Are they to satisfy personal curiosity? Critical information requests relating to occupational effectiveness? Difficult questions arising from school assignments?"

The entire sample of 236 reference questions from the centers and Systems visited was examined by a professional librarian coder, who assigned to each question one of four possible purposes: personal informing, personal coping, occupation, or formal education.

For the purposes of this analysis, these codes have been treated as mutually exclusive categories. Obviously, the patron at a given point in time may have multiple purposes for her or his inquiry. However, a clearer picture of the uses of the reference/referral services emerges when the queries are assessed for their predominant purpose rather than for all possible purposes.

Since the raw data available for determining the users' purposes were the communications between the originating library and the reference centers, inferring the purpose of the original user was difficult, and the resulting table (Table 3) must be seen as giving only the roughest indication.

TABLE 3. IMPUTED PURPOSE OF USER QUESTIONS

System or Center (No. of questions)	Personal Informing	Personal Coping	Occupation	Formal Education
BARC (50)	54%	30%	14%	2%
SCAN (50)	60	22	12	6
North State (50)	40	36	22	2
Peninsula (36)	33	53	11	3
Serra (50)	50	26	22	2
ALL	48	32	17	3

SOURCE: King Research, Inc. Reference Question Sample.

The first code, personal informing, was assigned to any inquiry not clearly indicating that a more specific code would be appropriate. Thus, many queries that might in fact have purposes relating to personal coping, occupation, or formal education were assigned a code of personal informing. Also included were queries such as "How much is my inherited teapot (description given) worth?" In all, almost half (48 percent) of the 236 queries were assigned to personal informing. The range of percentages across the five centers was from 33 percent to 60 percent. Although more information on the queries may have reduced this class, it may be inferred that a substantial portion of the questions sent on to reference centers were to meet the personal informing needs of clients.

The code of personal coping was assigned if there was clear indication in the documentation that the patron would act on the response. In the previous example, if the patron had said that she/he wanted an appraisal of the inherited teapot in order to sell it, then the code of personal coping would have been assigned. Examples of personal coping questions include hobbies, repairs to cars or home, investments, report writing, and travel. Overall, 32 percent of the queries related to personal coping on the part of the patron. With more information on the queries, this already substantial portion would no doubt increase. The range of percentages was from 22 percent to 53 percent.

"Occupation" was assigned if there was a clear indication that the information obtained would be used in some professional or job-related activity. Clues were sought from the return address of the patron as well as the reason given for the query. If the query said that the patron was writing a book on the subject, the code "occupation" was assigned. Overall, 17 percent of the queries could be assigned this code, with a range across the Systems of 11 percent to 22 percent. Since clear evidence of occupational application was required for this code, this percentage is an under-estimate of the actual occupation-related use of the System.

The last code, formal education, required specific reference to a school assignment or class-related report. Most probably, the resulting estimate of 3 percent overall is a gross under-estimate. Alternative explanations would be that school assignments do not require the services of a reference/referral system; that local librarians discourage use of the System for school-related queries; or that local librarians perceive that the referral network is reluctant to respond to school-related queries and so disguise them on the transmission forms.

We concluded that, even with our conservative coding approach, California's citizens are using the referral network for questions of importance to them. A large proportion of the questions relate to actions that the clients will take or to their occupation or education.

3.1.2 Effectiveness of the Network's Question-Answering

In evaluating the effectiveness of the network's question-answering, we used four measures: the proportion of referred questions that are answered, the accuracy and completeness of the answers provided, the turnaround time, and the ease of use of the network.

3.1.2.1 Proportion of Questions Answered

In the library survey, respondents told us that the most important criteria for network services were the proportion of questions answered and the quality of the answers provided. The time required to get answers to questions and the ease of use of the network were also very important, but not as important as the quality of the answers.

To determine how many of the questions currently being referred to the network are being answered, we turned to two sources: our sample of questions, and the libraries themselves.

The responses to the opinion part of the library survey indicated that libraries would accept, on the whole, no more than 5 percent unanswered questions among those referred to which an answer is possible. The responding libraries also indicated that they were overall quite well pleased with the network's performance. (Appendix A.)

We also asked the responding libraries to reconstruct from their own records, or, if necessary, to estimate the proportions of their referred questions answered by each part of the referral network, and the proportion not answered at all. About 5 percent of referred questions, overall, are unanswered, although this goes as high as 25 percent in one system. (See Table 4.) The proportion of questions answered within each System, as opposed to by other parts of the network, also varies considerably from one System to another (Table 5).

TABLE 4. REFERRED QUESTIONS NOT ANSWERED, BY SYSTEM

System	% of Questions Not Answered
BALIS	12%
Black Gold	3
49-99	4
Inland	4
MCLS	3
MOBAC	2
MVLS	9
North Bay	3
North State	6
Peninsula	4
SJVLS	4
Santiago	1
Serra	6
South Bay	0
South State	25

SOURCE: King Research, Inc. Library Survey, Appendix A, Table A-1.

TABLE 5. QUESTIONS ANSWERED WITHIN SYSTEMS

	% of Questions Answered		
System	System Reference Center	System Public Libraries	Total Within System
BALIS	15	33	48%
Black Gold	90	1	91
49-99	66	3	69
Inland	68	2	70
MCLS	70	11	81
MOBAC	51	12	63
MVLS	73	2	75
North Bay	31	17	48
North State	55	3	58
Peninsula	31	28	59
SJVLS	60	15	75
Santiago	70	14	84
Serra	78	3	81
South Bay	60	17	77
South State	NA	NA	NA

SOURCE: King Research, Inc. Library Survey, Appendix A, Table A-1.

Table 6 shows the results of the evaluation of the sample questions from the Systems and centers visited. (Appendix D describes the evaluation method.) Because the sample was small, these figures are only estimates, and must be interpreted with care. Also, no control was exercised over the difficulty of the questions chosen for evaluation. By using actual questions submitted to the referral centers, however, rather than asking them to attempt to answer questions constructed by us, we get a more realistic picture of the service that they give referring libraries. Our intention was not to evaluate these individual organizations, but to learn more about the network as a whole by looking at this slice of it.

Our first concern with Table 6 is with the questions not answered. Overall, only 4 percent of the total questions in the sample were judged unanswered. This figure may be low, because some of the questions for which the documentation was unclear may actually have been unanswered; what may have appeared to be an incompletely documented question might actually have been unanswered. This figure ranged from zero to 5 percent among the various Systems and centers.

We conclude that overall the network is meeting libraries' expectations concerning the number of questions eventually answered. The variations reported on the library survey, however, suggest that the quality of service throughout the network is uneven, at best.

3.1.2.2 Quality of Answers

Whether or not a question was answered at all is one quality measure of question-answering. Another is whether the answers that are provided do in fact answer the question: whether they are complete and correct. Again, most of the survey respondents were quite satisfied with the service provided by the referral network. In order to verify their assessment, however, we asked our judges to evaluate the answers provided to our sample of reference questions from the sites visited. Table 6 also reports these findings.

TABLE 6. REFERENCE QUESTION EVALUATION SUMMARY

	System or Center (# of questions evaluated)					
Evaluation of Questions Answered	BARC (20)	SCAN (21)	North State (30)	Peninsula (24)	Serra (36)	ALL (131)
Complete and Correct	80%	52%	83%	80%	83%	79%
Mostly Correct	10	38	13	13	5	15
Partially Correct	0	0	0	0	3	1
Incorrect Answer Given	5	5	3	0	0	2
No Answer Given[1]	5	5	0	0	8	4

Columns may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

[1] Although answer was possible, in the opinion of the judges.

SOURCE: King Research, Inc. Reference Question Sample.

Overall, 79 percent of the questions evaluated were answered completely and correctly. Only 2 percent were incorrect, and 4 percent were not answered even though an answer was possible, in the opinion of the judges. The major failing was in answers that were mostly correct, but not complete: 15 percent of the total. The proportion complete and correct ranged from 83 percent at North State and Serra to 52 percent at SCAN.

In fairness, we must point out that the questions referred to SCAN are relatively difficult; Serra, among others, refers its unanswered questions to SCAN. BARC and SCAN, however, receive questions of roughly comparable difficulty. Because our sample included relatively few questions collected over a fairly short period of time (one month), the relatively poor performance of SCAN on this test may not necessarily mean that it is providing a lower quality of service, overall. We did not hear complaints from the libraries and Systems that referred questions to SCAN about the quality of the answers received; indeed, such complaints as we did hear centered on SCAN's tendency to place a higher priority on a thorough search than a speedy reply. Since SCAN's performance on this test is so far out of line with that of the other center and Systems, however, we do recommend that it be researched further.

All of the individual Systems and centers judged fell below the 95 percent complete and correct that survey respondents wanted. However, each of the organizations evaluated is only one component of the reference referral network. Putting together Serra and SCAN, for example, we find that if Serra answers 83 percent of a library's questions completely and correctly, and refers to SCAN the remaining 17 percent, of which SCAN then answers 52 percent, their combined efforts would answer 91 percent of the referring library's questions. In the North, Peninsula and BARC together would answer 96 percent, and North State and BARC 97 percent. The difficulty, then, is with the questions that are not completely answered and not referred further because all parties believe that the answers are complete.

What we found was that the quality of the answers provided is high but not as high as librarians generally believe. To the extent that there is a discrepancy between the survey respondents' perceptions of the quality of service and our findings, these may be due to the following.

1. Our evaluation covered a small sample over a short period of time which may not be representative of the service overall.

2. We may have had an incomplete record of the interaction between referring and receiving library.

3. Most of the questions sent to judges appeared to be complete and correct. The librarian at the reference center usually believed that she or he had answered the question, as did the referring librarian. It was only when our judges sought to verify the answer that they found otherwise.

The judges who chose to comment were unamimous in their praise for the California reference referral network based on the samples with which they worked. Several commented on the unusual thoroughness with which each question was researched. They reported that in their experience the receiving librarian's responsibility ended when he or she had exhausted his or her own collection. What they found unique about California was the extent to which the reference centers would continue the search outside of their own walls.

The only comparable data for other libraries comes from several studies of libraries (not systems) performed by Thomas Childers, a member of our project team.[2] He has found repeatedly that public service staff answer correctly between 55 and 65 percent of questions of medium difficulty asked by researchers posing as patrons. By these standards, the reference service provided by the referral network is well above average. Overall, we concluded that the quality of the answers given to referred questions is good, but can be improved.[3]

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[2] Terence Crowley and Thomas Childers, Information Service in Public Libraries: Two Studies. (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1971) and Thomas Childers, "The Test of Reference," Library Journal 105 (April 15, 1980): 924-928.

[3] Because of differences in the testing method, our results are not directly comparable with those of the Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, and Co., study. However, our success rates were well above theirs, which ranged from about 30 to 40 percent correct answers for the questions posed.

That the California reference referral network appears to be providing a higher quality of reference service than is generally the case in public libraries naturally gives rise to questions of whether this level of service is excessive. As we have noted before, the choice of the appropriate level of service is a policy decision. The librarians with whom we talked, however, stressed the importance of equal access to information for all users, regardless of their personal characteristics or those of the questions asked. In providing this high level of service, the libraries of California are consistent with the principles set forth in The Public Library Mission Statement and Its Imperatives for Service,[4] a statement of philosophy approved by the Public Library Association, which stresses the role of the library as the provider of all kinds of information to all the community.

3.1.2.3 Turnaround Time

Another major criterion against which performance must be evaluated is turnaround time, that is, the time that it takes for the network to answer a question. Turnaround time evoked the most criticism of the referral network in the surveys and interviews, although the extent to which this was considered a problem varied from System to System and library to library.

Several factors influence turnaround time:

1. The elapsed time between when the user asks the question and when the library refers it.

2. The communications mechanism. Some libraries use TWX, and the question is communicated instantly. Smaller libraries may send a written request in the System delivery which may only go two or three times a week. Telephone is discouraged

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[4] American Library Association. Public Library Association. Goals, Guidelines, and Standards Committee. The Public Library Mission Statement and Its Imperatives for Service. Chicago: American Library Association, 1979.

by some network components because the other methods provide a written record.

3. Any backlog at the secondary reference center.

4. The amount of staff time actually required for the question.

5. Waiting for material not on the shelf, people not available, letters not responded to, and so forth.

6. The receiving librarian may need to go back to the referring librarian for clarification.

7. If the question is referred to the tertiary level, the same delays due to backlogs, need for clarification, wait for materials, and so forth, may occur.

8. The means by which the reply is communicated, which may be by phone, TWX, mail, or delivery.

9. The time required to notify the patron.

10. If the answer is in the form of materials, the delay before the patron can pick them up.

There are many possible sources of delay in the total referral network, some avoidable, some not. In our analysis, we could only look at the time required from when the question is referred until the reply is sent, which underestimates the total delay for the user but which covers most of the question's trip through the referral network.

Urgency is a function of the individual client's need for information, not of the information itself. The network tries to be responsive to the client's needs. At the same time, reference referral takes time, and backlogs sometimes develop. The way that the network generally copes with urgency is to give priority to questions with deadlines. Librarians are encouraged to use deadlines judiciously. Most components of the network ask that deadlines only be used to indicate a genuine limit on the time within which the patron can use the information.

An exception to this general policy on deadlines is SCAN, which asks referring librarians to provide deadlines for all requests to give SCAN a general indication of the urgency of the user's need. The SCAN staff generally prefer this policy, because they feel that it gives them a goal to work toward on each question. The libraries and Systems that use SCAN were less than enthusiastic, however. They felt that such deadlines were arbitrary and artificial. Their main complaint was that genuine deadlines were sometimes treated as flexible, and missed. The solution might be a general policy to at least report to the referring library within a fixed period of time; this would give the staff a goal toward which to work without requiring that the referring library set a new deadline for each question.

We collected turnaround time information from different sources in different forms. On the survey, we asked the responding libraries to reconstruct from their own records, or, if necessary, estimate, the proportion of requests filled within a given period of time. The results are summarized in Figure 4. The System by System results appear in Table A-2, Appendix A.

Only six percent of all referrals are resolved within 24 hours. This is no doubt an underestimate; we were told that when one library picks up the phone and calls another the transaction is rarely counted[5]. Almost 90 percent, however, are resolved within a month. This does not meet the expectations expressed on the opinion portion of the library survey: respondents wanted 90 percent of their requests answered within two weeks.

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[5] Statistics-keeping at member libraries seems to be a recurring problem. The System and center reference staffs see a direct connection between the statistics they keep and their funding. Member library reference people, however, place a much lower priority on statistics, especially when they are busy serving the public.

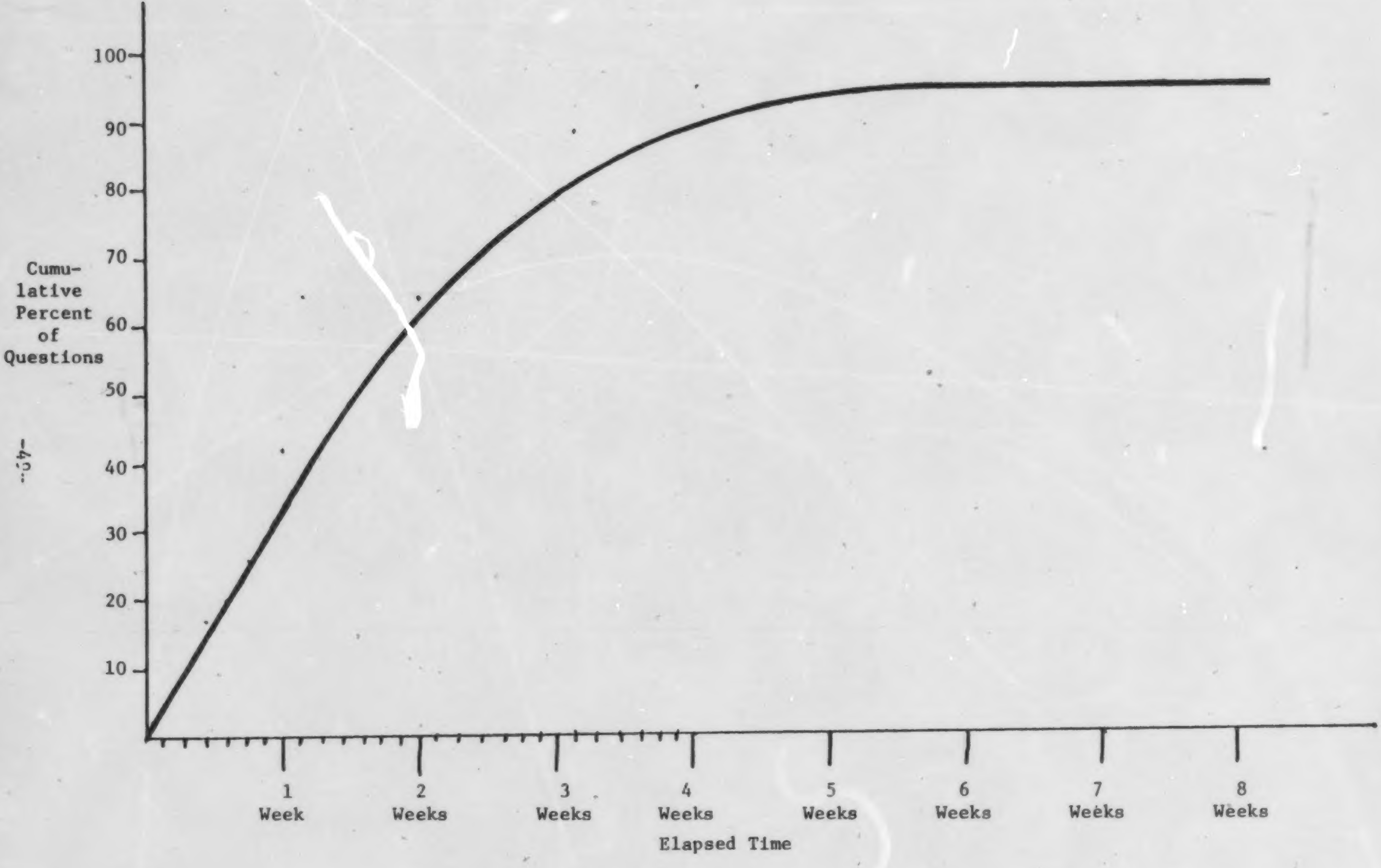

Figure 4. Turnaround Time

Turnaround time as it was reported to us varied considerably from one System to another. We found a weak relationship between turnaround time and the proportion of questions answered at the System level. Sending a large proportion of questions to the tertiary level does apparently tend to increase turnaround time, but answering a large proportion of questions within the System does not guarantee fast turnaround, either.

From the Systems and centers that we visited, we collected information on average turnaround time by asking to see their activity logs or (in the case of Serra) analyzing our sample of 50 questions (Table 7). As expected from such a varied group, the turnaround time varied, as well. North State showed the shortest turnaround time. A large proportion of the questions received by its System reference centers can be answered quickly from the centers' collections, because many of the referring libraries are very small and the questions simple. The North State staff try to get a reply onto the next thrice-weekly delivery truck, and appear to be succeeding. Peninsula and Serra both take longer, but both Systems' libraries are larger, with more extensive resources than North State's, so the referred questions are more complex.

The questions sent to the tertiary level take much longer than those answered within the System. In many cases, delivery time also has to be added to the reference centers' figures. Sending a request to BARC or SCAN, then, significantly affects the time that the user will have to wait for an answer.

Finally, among our sample of 236 questions from the Systems and centers visited, we found 75 questions which had deadlines stated. Twenty-four questions had flexible deadlines, and 51 firm deadlines. The number of deadline questions from any one site was small. Among the questions with firm deadlines (a date by which the patron had to have the answer), three, or 6 percent, were not answered before the deadline date. Among those with flexible deadlines (an indication of when the patron would like to have the answer) seven were answered later, or 29 percent. We concluded, therefore, that the network does a good job of meeting patron's deadlines.

TABLE 7. AVERAGE TURNAROUND TIME, CENTERS AND SYSTEMS VISITED

Center or System	No. of Requests	Turnaround in Calendar Days
BARC[1]	266	19.3
SCAN[1]	287	11.4
North State[1]		
Questions answered by System reference center	53	2.4
Questions sent to BARC	13	10.7[2]
Peninsula[1]		
Questions answered by System reference center	34	10.4
Questions sent to BARC	12	48.6[2]
Serra[3]		
Questions answered by System reference center	39	8.4
Questions sent to SCAN	6	27.0

[1] Source: System/Center request logs. Time is from when question is received until final reply is sent.

[2] Time from when question arrived at System to final resolution, including time within System and at BARC.

[3] Source: King Research, Inc. sample of questions.

In our interviews and the survey responses, we found some dissatisfaction with turnaround time and the handling of deadline requests. The level of dissatisfaction varied considerably from one area to another, as did performance. Public service librarians told us that they sometimes do not refer questions because they do not believe that they will be answered soon enough to satisfy the requestor. We also heard some stories of instances where the patron needed the information desperately and the deadline was missed. Although these cases are few, in proportion, they leave a big impression on the reference staff. Some additional causes of discontent were: delays that were excessive in light of the information requested and/or provided; lack of status reports; periodic backlogs at the reference centers; and the perception of the librarian working with the client that the reference center staff placed too low a priority on prompt replies.

Other librarians, however, were quite content with the time required for referred questions, feeling that the time required was not excessive and that it would be unrealistic to expect answers any more quickly. Some also questioned whether it would be worth the cost to increase the speed of response.

We concluded that the speed of response is not a major problem in the referral network, but that it is an area where improvement is needed.

3.1.2.4 Ease of Use

We could only measure the ease with which a librarian can refer a question qualitatively. Generally, the local System was rated on the survey as easier to use than BARC or SCAN, but, overall, ease of use was no problem. The secondary and tertiary centers are very concerned that they present no barriers to referral, and are extremely accommodating to the libraries. They are so accommodating, in fact, that in the question evaluation we had some difficulties with questions not stated clearly enough for our purposes, which the receiving libraries nevertheless accepted. Some of the judges suggested more rigid referral protocols covering the information sent and its format. There are guidelines, but some libraries do not adhere to them.

The TWX machine itself is occasionally a barrier. In the sample of referral messages were many references to the machine itself and the difficulty of typing on it. However, those experienced with TWX generally felt that it was a considerable help because it provided instantaneous transmission and a written copy of the message for both parties. Although some individuals felt that a two-way phone conversation was necessary to fully communicate a request, most of the TWX users whom we interviewed disagreed.

3.1.3 Reasons Questions Are Not Referred

The stated policy of most local libraries is to refer any and all unanswered questions that do not fall into one of the categories excluded by the network. In practice, we found that most local librarians do filter the requests that are referred, based on, among other things, their perception of the sophistication of clients' need and their judgment of the likelihood that he or she will actually return to pick up the answer. In addition to this kind of filtering, which tends to follow fairly clear, though unofficial, guidelines, questions may fail to be referred from the local library for a number of other reasons. The user may be unable or unwilling to wait for a referral; he or she may tell the reference librarian not to bother with a referral; the librarian may be busy, or unacquainted with the referral mechanisms, or simply unwilling to offer to refer the question; or the librarian may not believe (rightly or wrongly) that the question can be answered by the network.

We could not, of course, collect data on the extent to which unanswered questions were not referred. In our discussions with librarians around the State, we received varying estimates of the extent to which this occurs. Improved training of reference staffs would undoubtedly improve the staff-related failures to refer. Improved performance of the network should also increase the extent to which it is called upon. If staff and users believe that questions will be answered promptly and accurately, they are more likely to refer a question. Therefore, any improvement in the user and the librarian's expectations of the network will increase referral as well.

The fact that not all referrable questions are referred has important implications for the future of the referral network. If, through such mechanisms as training or an improvement in the performance of the network itself, previously unreferred questions are referred, then the increase in volume in network activity will be more than we could otherwise predict simply looking at the number of questions referred presently.

Buckland[6] found that when a library improved the availability rate of its materials, demand was increased, which reduced availability until it returned to the former levels, but at a higher level of activity; that is, more items were circulated, but the user entering the library searching for a specific item was no more likely to find it on the shelf. We can hypothesize that improving the performance of the reference referral network would increase the number of questions referred, adversely impacting such measures as turnaround time, until the network returned to its former levels of performance, but at a higher volume.

3.1.4 Level of Activity

Statistics are collected on reference activity within local libraries and Systems and at BARC and SCAN. However, the statistics collection and reporting methods make it difficult to determine how many reference questions are answered within the State and what proportion of them are answered by various components of the network. Many of the statistics that are reported to the State are not compiled, analyzed, or published, and so are not in a form usable for statewide planning.

Individual libraries report reference questions answered locally, at the library headquarters, and on referral from other libraries on their California Public Library Report to the State Library. Counting reference questions is difficult under the best of circumstances, but this form gives no instructions on what is to be counted or how. Anomolies in the data indicate that these figures are unreliable. For example, one small library reported answering ten times as many questions on referral from other libraries as for its own patrons in 1978-79.

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[6] Buckland, Michael K. Book Availability and the Library User. New York: Pergamon Press, 1975.

The Systems report reference activity on their annual System Program Expenditure Reports. They also predict the coming year's activity on their Budget Requests. The State Library told us that these figures should only include System reference activity; however, some Systems told us that they also included questions answered by member libraries, which may represent questions already counted on those libraries' Public Library Reports as answered on referral. In addition, some Systems with more than one reference center told us that not all their centers' activities are reported on their Expenditure Reports. The result is that the available data on past System reference activity is only an approximation. Finally, the reporting categories have changed over time, making longitudinal analysis impossible.

BARC and SCAN keep careful statistics on their volume of activity, which are included in their quarterly LSCA reports and not published. However, their activity must also be counted as an important part of reference referral within the State.

On our public library survey, we asked each library to report the number of questions that it had answered and that had been answered for it by other sources throughout the State for the last two years. Since we were collecting this data after the fact, however, we could only ask the libraries for the figures that they were compiling for their reports to the State Library, so our data suffers from the same flaws. We also asked for the proportion of referral questions answered by various sources. We then used these proportions to cross-check our estimates of the number of questions answered by each source.

From all of these sources, we estimated the current levels of reference activity reported in Table 8.

TABLE 8. ESTIMATED REFERENCE WORKLOAD, 1979-80

Local public library reference questions	31,000,000
Questions referred	40,000

Referral questions answered by:	Number	% of referrals:
Systems	22,800	57%
BARC and SCAN	6,000	15
Other public libraries in own system	4,000	10
California State Library	1,600	4
Non-public libraries	1,600	4
Other public libraries not in own system	1,200	3
Other sources	800	2
No answer found	2,000	5
TOTAL	40,000	100%

The local public library is the primary source of reference assistance to the individual. The approximately 31 million reference questions answered each year range from simple directional questions ("Where are your mystery books?") to complex queries. We have no way of estimating how many of those questions are not answered, or answered incompletely. Of the 40,000 questions not answered at the local level and referred on, 57 percent are answered at the System level. An additional 10 percent are answered by public libraries within the referring library's System, bringing to 67 percent the proportion answered within the System. BARC and SCAN answer 15 percent, all other sources combined answer 13 percent, and 5 percent of the total questions are never answered.

The 40,000 questions referred represent more than 40,000 reference transactions, since one question may be handled more than once before it is finally answered. To differentiate between the number of questions asked by the public and the workload represented by those questions, some of which may be handled more than once by different levels of the network if they are not answered on first try, we use "transactions" to refer to each discrete question-answering attempt on the part of the network.

To estimate the total volume of activity, we have to make some assumptions. Let us assume that all questions answered at the System level, in a System reference center or System public library, are answered on the first referral, and that all questions answered by another source were first referred to the System level, then referred once more to the source of the final answer. Let us also assume that unanswered questions were referred twice, once to the System level and once to one other source. Then the total number of reference transactions required for 40,000 questions would be 40,000 (at the System level) plus 17,200 (at all other levels) for a total of 57,200 transactions; 1.4 transactions per question.

3.2 Reference Support Services

In addition to answering reference questions, various parts of the reference referral network provide reference support services. The objectives of reference support services, also called indirect reference, are:

1. To improve the quality of reference services at every level of the network; the effect of this is to reduce the number of referrals, because more questions are answered at lower levels within the network.

2. To enhance the use of the network, by familiarizing librarians with the resources and procedures of the network; this, of course, increases the number of referrals made.

The most common reference support services are training, the production of reference tools (which help the librarian to answer reference questions) and finding tools (which help to locate needed materials), coordination of cooperative reference activities, and the provision of channels of communication (including newsletters and meetings). We have also classified System support for collection development as indirect reference.

The effect of indirect reference services cannot be measured. In part, this is because indirect reference may, in some cases, reduce referrals and in others increase them, in both cases contributing to the ultimate goal of the network: to answer more citizens' questions more quickly. In part this is because of the intangible nature of many of the effects of indirect reference services, in particular the increase in the quality of service within the local library.

Trade-offs exist between indirect and direct reference. The same resources that are used to answer a referred question could be used to provide reference support services, such as training, that would enable local librarians to answer many questions. These trade-offs cannot be measured directly, however, any more than the effects of indirect reference alone can be measured. It is not possible, therefore, to do a direct cost-effectiveness comparison between direct and indirect reference.

We can say that both kinds of reference services are needed. Reference support services make effective use of the resources of the total network. They reduce duplication of effort and speed the response to the patron by ensuring that a question is answered at the lowest possible level within the network. However, we would expect decreasing returns to scale on reference support services; at some point it becomes more cost-effective to simply answer a difficult and unusual question than to prepare the local library to answer a question that it may never receive.

Those library directors responding to our survey rated reference support services as important but placed a much lower priority on them as a network function than on question-answering. The librarians in the secondary and tertiary reference centers generally feel more strongly about the need for indirect reference services. They receive the results of the local libraries' efforts and can see where improvement is possible. Many of them are very active in providing such services. Most, however, see their primary responsibility as providing direct reference. The questions keep coming in, and demand to be answered. Other activities have to take second place to their primary task of providing timely and accurate answers to questions.

3.2.1 Training

The quality of reference service at the local level is a function of the library staff member's capabilities, the resources available, and the staff member's ability and willingness to use the referral network. Not all public service staff are professional librarians, and those who are do not emerge from library school knowing all there is to know about reference, and about the reference network. Training is an important factor in providing quality reference service.

Local libraries' training capabilities vary widely. The smaller the library the less likely it is to have the staff or the time to provide extensive in-service training. Continuing education opportunities also vary from one geographical area to another, and are generally concentrated in the more densely-populated areas with library schools, library technician programs, university extensions, and other educational facilities.

Training is an activity in which there are definite economies of scale. A workshop or curriculum, once developed, can be re-used. Training expertise must be developed and, once obtained, can be applied to different topics. To be effective, however, training has to be aimed at the particular needs of the clientele. It must be geared toward what the trainees already know and what they need to know. Each training activity has to be re-evaluated before it is re-used with a different audience.

Although many different kinds of training are needed in libraries, in the context of the reference referral network certain training areas are of particular importance:

- Basic reference skills, including question-answering and the reference interview, so that the local librarian can fulfill his or her responsibility to the patron and the network;

- More advanced reference skills, including special subject areas, in order to answer as many questions without referral as possible;

- Use of the referral network, so that it is used as effectively as possible, and the question that is referred includes all the necessary information and is referred in the proper manner to the most appropriate resource;

- Training skills, so that those within the network who have reference expertise know how best to share it with others.

In California, a number of organizations are involved in training. Within the reference referral network, however, the major training sources are the Systems and BARC and SCAN.

The Systems vary in the kinds and extent of training that they provide. The most common System-level training is periodic workshops on 1) how to make referrals, 2) special subject areas of local interest, and 3) local information resources. Usually the workshops are coordinated by System staff and presented by them with assistance (in-kind) from member library personnel.

Some of the more geographically dispersed Systems are using a self-paced basic reference correspondence course originally developed by the Fresno County Free Library. Those taking the course perform written exercises, which have to be graded. The graders may be System or member library staff. These same course supervisors often adapt the course to local needs and capabilities.

The major source of reference training in Northern California is BARC, which since its inception has been presenting workshops on topics of current interest. They have occasionally taken their workshops on the road, but usually they are presented in San Francisco. The workshops are managed by a Workshop Coordinator, and the resource people are BARC staff and local experts. The workshop materials - bibliographies, handouts, and transcripts - are widely distributed in California and elsewhere.

The librarians in the BARC service area are extremely enthusiastic about these workshops. The workshops have been of consistently high quality and the topics of great interest. As a referral center, BARC is well-situated to determine the subjects in which local and System librarians need help, and it has the human resources needed to put together high quality workshops. However, the BARC librarians say that Workshop Coordinator is a burn-out position, requiring a continual high degree of commitment and enthusiasm. Since the BARC staff are drawn from SFPL, it is sometimes difficult to find someone with the ability and interest to take the position.

BARC is reducing its training activities in 1980-81. It was not funded at the level that it requested, and decided that training was a lower-priority program.

SCAN's training is focussed on acquainting area librarians with SCAN itself. SCAN invites librarians from its constituent libraries to spend a day or two at SCAN, working with its staff and using the Los Angeles Public Library. The visitors become acquainted with SCAN's operations and resources and work on some referral questions themselves. The librarians who have participated in the program found it very effective in improving their use of SCAN and their reference and referral skills.

While they are generally enthusiastic about the training performed within the reference referral network, the librarians with whom we talked had several specific criticisms of it, as well. The major criticism is that there is not enough training. An occasional workshop for 20 or 30 or even 200 or 300 people barely scratches the surface.

The workshop format, which is frequently used, requires that trainers and trainees gather in the same geographical place all at one time. For BARC workshops, for example, this usually means San Francisco, which is a very long trip for many BARC users. And their libraries still have to be staffed while they are gone. The result is that not many people can attend. Workshops have been taken on the road in Systems like North State. This has the advantage of bringing the training to the library staff members. However, in geographically dispersed Systems it is sometimes difficult to bring together more than a handful of people in one place, even within the System boundaries.

Training is also extremely time-consuming, for both the trainers and the people who attend. With staff reductions after Proposition 13, many managers find themselves unable to afford the staff time for needed training.

Finally, the quality of the training available varies. The System reference staff are usually hired for their reference expertise, not their training ability. Some are not interested in or competent at training. It is not true that anyone who knows can teach. The System reference staff are dependent on the in-kind contribution of the member libraries to supplement their own efforts, and the time and expertise available varies

We concluded from our investigation that there is considerable need for reference-related training that is not currently being met. Training must be a continuing program managed by individuals who are knowledgeable about both reference and training. It is too important to be left to those who happen to have the interest and are able to squeeze in some time, as is now often the case.

3.2.2 Collection Development

Many of the Systems use part of their reference funds to supplement the collections of the System reference center(s) and/or other System libraries. In theory, these funds are indirect reference support, that is, they provide materials that enhance the System's reference capabilities. They also compensate the libraries whose collections are used for System reference. The materials bought with these funds include non-circulating reference books; abstracting and indexing services; and circulating materials in subject areas in which the System is weak. Reference draws on the entire collection, not just reference materials, and circulating as well as non-circulating materials are needed.

A secondary benefit of these collection funds is that the materials purchased are available to staff and patrons of the housing library, as well. They therefore enhance the local library's information-providing capability. This is very important in areas where the local collections are weak. Cooperation among weak libraries has limited benefits. As the people in North State repeatedly told us in our interviews, you cannot build on weakness. North State is an example of a System where the collection development funds have been a major component of coordinated reference and have had a significant impact on the overall quality of library service.

No overall policy exists to guide either the amount of System funds used for collection-development or the kinds of materials bought. We found that among the Systems the role of System collection-development funds varies considerably. In Peninsula, for example, the collection development budget is small and is used to purchase specialized reference tools. North State uses its collection development funds, a large part of the total System budget, to enhance both the circulating and non-circulating collections of the three reference centers, including the purchase of basic reference materials missing from the host libraries' collections. Significantly, BALIS does not have a System coordinated reference center or staff,[7] but instead chooses to put a large part of its CLSA money into materials spread among the System libraries.

Because the Systems do not have to account for their collection expenditures on a title-by-title basis-- and, indeed, given the volume of materials involved and the diversity of local needs, such an accounting would be impossible-- there is a potential for abuse of the collection development funds. In some Systems, we were told, the materials purchased with System funds are in no way different from those purchased by the local libraries. Although these materials are available for interlibrary loan and interlibrary reference, like everything else, the System funds are treated as an extension of the local book budget, with little differentiation between kinds of materials for which the local library should be responsible and those appropriately a System responsibility.

This is not to imply that unneeded materials are being purchased; however, a clear policy is needed concerning what materials are most appropriately purchased with System funds. The question is what is the purpose of the CLSA. Systems that choose to use a large proportion of their funds for collection development are providing their member libraries with a very different service from those that use theirs for reference staff.

The first step toward controlling the use of collection development funds is to establish a firm policy concerning the kinds of materials that are appropriate. Even though it would be impossible to enforce, it would provide the Systems with guidelines that do not now exist. We suggest that such a policy be worked out in consultation with reference specialists in the metropolitan reference centers and in the State Library's reference services division. Such a policy might include the following provisions:

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[7] By our definition; its Weekender service serves patrons directly; it does not perform interlibrary reference.

1. Appropriate materials would include non-circulation reference materials, including abstracting and indexing services, specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias, handbooks, and other non-circulating materials.

2. Circulating materials would not be excluded, but must be chosen with care. They should normally be non-fiction; be titles not already held within the System; and be entered into the California Statewide Database, in order to make them accessible to libraries within the System and around the State.

3.2.3 Other Reference Support

The other kinds of reference support activities that we identified were:

- The creation of finding tools, such as union lists and directories, that help librarians to find the most appropriate referral source;

- The creation of reference aids, such as indexes and bibliographies, that help the librarian to find the needed information, perhaps in his or her own collection, perhaps elsewhere;

- Coordination and communication, including the publication of newsletters, and the organization of committees and task forces to solve common problems.

As with all other reference services, the kinds of support services and the level of activity vary considerably from one System to another, depending on local needs, geographic barriers, and the System members' attitude toward concerted action. With their newsletters, BARC and SCAN serve as unofficial channels of regional communication. The Systems also contribute to interlibrary communication within their own areas, to varying degrees. Other forms of System cooperation also contribute.

The benefits of these kinds of services are impossible to quantify. Often they take the form of questions not referred, because the local librarian found the answer. In addition, the philosophy of cooperation that they engender is very important. Most referral goes through reference centers. Reference support activities tend to be more distributed. A union list of auto repair manuals, for example, may enable a library to contact directly another which owns the needed manual, encouraging cross-library cooperation and reminding the participants that the network has many components to it.

3.3 Service to the Underserved

The California Library Services Act specifies that each System is to spend "a fair and equitable portion of its reference allowance to improve the System's reference service to its underserved population through appropriate collection development, provision of reference specialists, and staff training" (Section 18741(b)). Elsewhere in the Act, "underserved" is defined as "any population segment with exceptional service needs not adequately met in traditional library service patterns; including, but not limited to, those persons who are geographically isolated, economically disadvantaged, functionally illiterate, of non-English-speaking or limited English-speaking ability, shut-in, institutionalized, or handicapped" (Section 18710(s)).

On their annual budget requests, each System is asked to indicate what dollar amount of its reference grant will be used to improve reference service to the underserved. We also asked in our System surveys what each System was doing to improve service to the underserved.

We found it difficult to tell what is being done for the underserved as ILR users at the System level. Some Systems reported on our survey a variety of services which fall under one or more of the CLSA mandated areas. Other Systems offered more general statements such as, "All System residents can be classified as geographically isolated and therefore disadvantaged clients," and "The System serves its disadvantaged or underserved through the individual efforts of the System members." These Systems, nevertheless, entered dollar figures for System service to the underserved in their budget requests.

Table 9 lists some examples of services provided, but is not intended to be an exhaustive inventory.

TABLE 9. REPORTED SYSTEMS REFERENCE SERVICES FOR THE UNDERSERVED

Area	Activities
Collection Development	Acquisition of multilingual materials Purchase of talking books Publication of union list of large type books Publication of union list of foreign language materials
Provision of Reference Specialists	Hire and publicize availability of multilingual staff
Staff Training	Provision of workshops
Miscellaneous	Installation of TTY machines Development of delivery systems to geographically isolated Member libraries make special effort to refer requests from disadvantaged

SOURCE: King Research, Inc. System Survey.

A major difficulty with the current reporting system is that the CLSA System Program Expenditure Report asks for the dollar amount of the system reference total which is spent to improve reference service to the underserved, but nowhere asks which services or resources were provided and in what quantities.

Nor does the report form ask for financial information about service to the underserved in any other reporting category, such as intrasystem delivery, which is important in serving the geographically isolated.

An additional difficulty in evaluating the network's services to the underserved is the broad definition of underserved, and the lack of a definition of reference services to the underserved. The network is probably most clearly improving service to the geographically isolated, since the function of the referral network is to bring needed information to the user's home library from wherever the information exists in the State. Those living in areas with small libraries with inadequate resources stand to gain the most from the referral network, as well as from other System programs, such as delivery and ILL. We found no evidence that the Systems (as distinct from their member libraries) are doing anything at all specifically for the institutionalized, the functionally illiterate, and the economical disadvantaged. Some projects are serving the handicapped with materials such as with TTYs and talking books; it's difficult to determine whether this is reference service or library services more generally. Finally, we were told that the network is not meeting the needs of those of non- or limited-English-speaking ability.

Many disadvantaged groups have information needs that precede those served by ILR. Childers[8] has shown that disadvantaged adults do not see problems as information needs, and are not very active information seekers even when a search is undertaken. Much of the information that they do need is personal coping information of the kind provided by Information and Referral services, and specific to the local community.

Childers suggests that one of the ways of meeting the information needs of the disadvantaged is to provide more information communication through interpersonal contact.[9] This is very costly, because it is labor-intensive. It also does not fall within our definition of coordinated reference, since what is needed is service to the citizen, not the library. To talk about reference referral for the disadvantaged is to assume that they get as far as to make their information need known to their local library. A more basic need is to get them into the library (or get the library to them), to let them know that the library can help and to encourage them to recognize and communicate their need.

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[8] Thomas Childers, The Information Poor in America. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1975.

[9] Childers, p. 92.

Other underserved groups generally need the same kinds of information as the rest of the population. The difference is how that information is delivered or communicated. For the institutionalized shut-ins, the problem is getting the information to them. For those with limited English and certain handicaps, the problem is the physical form of the information. Librarians in one biracial community told us that the kinds of questions that they get from their Spanish- and English-speaking users are the same, usually personal coping questions. The difference is that the Spanish-speaking may need Spanish-language materials, which are much more difficult to find because not as many are published, acquired, and cataloged.

The needs of the underserved for basic library services are too great for us to be able to make any definitive statement within the context of this study of the reference referral network. What we can say is that the referral network is doing very little to meet the needs of the underserved, as distinct from those of other groups, with the exception of the geographically isolated. The network does do a good job of bringing information to the latter group, although the level of library service that they receive is not on a par with that of those in more densely-populated areas, largely because of lack of local resources and geographical barriers.

We question whether the referral network is the appropriate place for activities designed to meet the needs of the underserved that are different from those of the community as a whole. The fact that the network has done so little so far suggests that is is not the correct vehicle. The people who staff the referral network currently are reference librarians. Their skills are not in service to the underserved. To tack service to the underserved onto what is essentially a separate program will only ensure that it remains a stepchild. We recommend that service to the underserved be treated as a separate program, and that an adequate statewide needs assessment be performed and a program designed.

This is not to say that the underserved have no place in the referral network. They should receive service of the same quality as other users, and Systems should work with the local libraries to make them sensitive to this. What we are saying is that the needs of many of the underserved are for basic library service, for which referral cannot substitute.

3.4 Costs

The cost of reference service is difficult to measure. Library activities are so interdependent that their costs are not readily distinguishable. It is also difficult to determine which services are end products and which intermediate products; for example, is a cataloged book an end product or an intermediate product that contributes to reference service? If the latter, then at least part of the cost of acquiring, cataloging, and processing the book should be attributed to reference services. But what part of it? This problem is particularly acute in cooperative reference, where a State-funded program is housed in a locally-funded library, and draws on its host library's resources.

The usual way of costing library services is to rely on marginal costs, that is, those costs that are readily-attributable to the service in question, keeping in mind the limitations of this method. This is the method that is followed here.

Reference referral activity in California is supported from three sources: libraries which make in-kind contributions of staff time and the use of their materials, buildings, and equipment; CLSA; and Federal LSCA funds.

Table 10 summarizes the costs of reference referral activities performed by BARC and SCAN and the Systems from 1978-79 to 1980-81. The total reference expenditures are computed by adding the total expenditures of BARC and SCAN and

TABLE 10. TOTAL REFERENCE EXPENDITURES 1978-79 THROUGH 1980-81

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81
Cooperative Systems	\$1,095,745[1]	\$1,178,388[2]	\$1,212,361[3]
Single Jurisdiction Systems	\$ 42,364[1]	\$ 170,271[4]	\$ 124,625[3]
BARC and SCAN	\$ 734,600[5]	\$ 736,800[5]	\$ 695,012[5]
TOTAL	\$1,872,709	\$2,085,459	\$2,031,998

[1] California Library Statistics and Directory, 1980.

[2] California Library System Reports, 1980.

[3] System Program Budget Requests, 1980-81.

[4] System Program Expenditure Reports, 1980.

[5] LSCA Award Letters.

the reference program expenditures of the Systems. In 1979-80, this came to $2.1 million, or, 9 cents per capita, $1.3 million of which was from CLSA. The Systems actually spent about $20,000 more on reference than they got from CLSA. The Systems are allocated CLSA funds by program. To their CLSA funds they add income from other sources, including contributions from their members. They then report total expenditures by program, regardless of the sources of funds. For 1979-80, some Systems reported spending slightly more on reference than their CLSA appropriation, and some slightly less. This appears to be due to differences between expected and actual expenditures. BARC and SCAN are currently supported with Federal LSCA demonstration funds.

Reference was on the average 26 percent of total System expenditures, ranging from 16 percent in Peninsula to 60 percent in North Bay (Table 11).

In order to separate the cost of question-answering from that of reference support activities, we asked the Systems and centers to estimate the proportion of their total activity devoted to question-answering. We then took a proportional amount of the salaries, operating expenditures, and equipment and attributed them to question-answering. We excluded from question-answering the expenditures on materials. Although these do contribute to direct reference, materials are used for other purposes as well, and are a large proportion of total cooperative System reference expenditures: 19 percent in 1979-80.

We could calculate the relative costs of question-answering and reference support services for 1979-80. For 1980-81, we have only budgets and projected levels of activity. The Systems' projections differ considerably, based as they are on differing assumptions about future trends in the level of reference activity. The 1978-79 data proved to be skewed by the impact of Proposition 13, which passed in June of 1978. The Systems had expected an increase in referral activity, on the assumption that local libraries would be less able to handle complex reference questions. Instead, activity decreased, apparently because libraries were open shorter hours with fewer staff, meaning that they got fewer questions. Since the Systems do not vary their staffing with short-

TABLE 11. SYSTEM EXPENDITURES, 1979-80

System	Total System Expenditures	System Reference Expenditure	Reference Expenditure as a Percent of Total Expenditure
BALIS	$ 202,223	$ 67,263	33%
Black Gold	388,715	96,063	25
49-99	277,403	46,631	17
Inland	403,394	98,662	25
MCLS	298,674	86,381	29
MOBAC	153,687	32,792	21
MVLS	305,864	91,630	30
North Bay	87,701[1]	52,179	60
North State	398,265	76,037	19
Peninsula	333,908	53,269	16
SJVLS	315,542	101,224	32
Santiago[2]	225,698	57,012	25
Serra	427,223	147,853	35
South Bay	336,759	85,576	25
South State	454,967	85,816	19
Total	$4,610,023	$1,178,388	26%
Single-jurisdiction Systems:			
Long Beach	12,051	11,963	NA
Los Angeles	113,869	113,811	NA
San Francisco	44,497	44 497	NA
Total	$4,780,440	$1,348,659	NA

SOURCE: California Library System Report, 1980.

[1] 1978-79 data. Failed to provide requested 1979-80 expenditure data.

[2] 1979-80 budget. Failed to provide requested 1979-80 expenditure data.

term changes in workload, the decline in referrals immediately after Proposition 13 had the effect of temporarily raising their unit costs. A final difficulty was that we had to ask the Systems to estimate the division of their reference effort between direct and indirect reference, since they do not budget or collect workload data in this way. We could ask them at the time of the survey (Spring, 1980) to estimate the current division; we could not expect them to provide reliable data on past fiscal years.

Table 12 summarizes the System expenditures for 1979-80 by budget category, and shows question-answering as a percent of total reference effort and the total cost of question-answering within each system. It ranges from zero in BALIS (whose Weekender service answers questions for patrons, and is thus not interlibrary reference) to 90 percent at Black Gold. Table 13 calculates the total reference expenditures and question-answering reference expenditure, per question and per capita. Table 14 summarizes these findings.

In calculating costs per question, the figures that we used for workload were those for total system reference workload from the System Expenditure Reports. We have already discussed the problems with these reports; we have no assurances that all of the Systems were reporting the same things. The alternative, however, is to use only the number of questions answered within each System from those same reports; this would inflate the cost figures for Systems that have a low rate of success within the System, since questions handled but not answered would not be included.

The question-answering costs per question averaged $15 among the cooperative Systems. Single-jurisdiction Systems do not engage in intra-System question-answering, by definition, and their inter-System question-answering activity is negligible. BALIS does not use its System reference funds to answer questions on referral from the member libraries. South State is also anomolous, since a large number of the questions handled within the System are answered by member library staff but it does have System-paid reference staff, as well, and we could not distinguish between them in the workload figures. The range among the other Systems is from $13 per question in Santiago to $53 in South Bay.

TABLE 12. REFERENCE EXPENDITURES BY BUDGET CATEGORY, 1979-80

System	(1) Salary		(2) Materials		(3) Operating		(4) Equipment		(5) Total	(6) Question-Answering as a Percent of Total Reference Effort[1]	(7) Question-Answering Expenditures[2]
	$	%	$	%	$	%	$	%	$		
BALIS	13,134	20	31,832	47	22,297	33	0	0	67,263	0%	$ 0
Black Gold	85,973	89	2,336	2	7,754	8	0	-	96,063	90	84,354
49-99	42,582	91	2,635	6	699	1	715	2	46,631	70	30,979
Inland[3]	60,618	61	20,660	21	11,334	11	6,050	6	98,662	56	43,681
MCLS	79,016	91	745	1	6,620	8	0	-	86,381	50	42,818
MOBAC[4]	19,084	58	5,910	18	7,046	21	752	2	32,792	75	20,161
MVLS	55,492	61	29,338	32	6,069	7	731	1	91,630	90	56,062
North Bay	45,032	86	4,887	9	2,260	4	-	0	52,179	52	24,591
North State	46,570	61	28,000	37	1,467	2	0	-	76,037	70	33,625
Peninsula[4]	26,584	50	3,600	7	23,085	43	0	-	53,269	30	14,900
SJVLS	89,149	88	7,227	7	4,848	5	0	-	101,224	60	56,398
Santiago[5]	43,696	77	10,846	19	2,470	4	0	-	57,012	41	18,928
Serra	111,305	75	4,997	3	31,551	21	0	-	147,853	60	85,713
South Bay[4]	76,407	89	4,300	5	4,869	6	0	-	85,576	65	52,829
South State	18,408	21	63,633	74	3,775	4	0	-	85,816	40	8,873
Subtotal	813,050	69	220,946	19	136,144	11	8,248		1,178,388	49	573,730
Single Jurisdiction Systems[6]											
Long Beach	-		11,561	97	-		402	3	11,963	-	-
Los Angeles	40,195	35	72,840	64			776	1	113,811	-	-
San Francisco	12,267	27	-		8,010	18	24,405	55	44,682	-	-
TOTAL	865,512	64	305,347	23	144,154	11	33,831		1,348,844	-	573,730

SOURCE: California Library System Reports, 1980, except as noted.

[1] King Research, Inc., Library Survey, 1980.

[2] Computed as follows: [Salary (1) + Operating (3) + Equipment (4)] x Question Answering Effort (6) = Question-Answering Expenditures.

[3] Includes SIRCULS.

[4] Includes CIN.

[5] 1978-79 data. Failed to provide requested 1979-80 data.

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TABLE 13. REFERENCE EXPENDITURES 1979-80

Cooperative System	Total System Reference Expenditures[1]	Question-Answering Expenditures[2]	Questions[3]	Total Reference Expenditures Per Question	Question-Answering Expenditure Per Question	1980 Population	Total Reference Expenditures Per Capita	Question-Answering Expenditure per Capita
BALIS	$ 67,263	$ 0	$ 1,581	$ 43	$ -	1,600,000	$ .04	$ -
Black Gold	96,063	84,354	2,433	39	35	901,500	.11	.09
44-99	46,631	30,797	2,140	22	14	781,720	.06	.04
Inland[5]	98,662	43,681	3,089	32	14	1,469,600	.07	.03
MCLS	86,381	42,818	2,126	41	20	4,500,000	.02	.01
MOBAC[6]	32,792	20,161	1,098	30	18	425,000	.08	.05
MVLS	91,630	56,062	1,848	50	30	1,250,360	.07	.04
North Bay	52,179	24,591	1,031	51	24	901,800	.06	.03
North State	76,037	33,625	1,980	38	17	538,835	.04	.06
Peninsula[6]	53,269	14,900	1,066	50	14	586,000	.09	.03
SJVLS	101,224	56,398	2,775	36	20	875,000	.12	.06
Santiago[7]	57,012	18,928	1,498	38	13	1,729,294	.03	.01
Serra	147,853	85,713	2,483	60	35	1,858,350	.08	.05
South Bay[6]	85,576	58,829	1,120	76	53	1,231,400	.07	.05
South State	85,816	8,873	11,798	7	<1	2,735,521	.03	<.01
Cooperative Systems Subtotal	$1,178,388	$ 579,730	$ 38,066	$ 31 average	$ 15 average	21,384,380	$ .06 average	$ .04 average
Single jurisdiction Systems								
Long Beach	$ 11,963	-	-	-	-	349,000	-	-
Los Angeles	113,811	-	-	-	-	2,801,900	-	-
San Francisco	44,682	-	-	-	-	657,200	-	-
Total	$1,348,844	$ 579,730	$ 38,066	$ 31 average	$ 15 average	25,192,480	$ .06 average	$ .04 average

Footnotes:

[1] California Library System Report 1980.

[2] King Research, Inc. See Table 12, Reference Expenditures by Budget Category, 1979-80, for computation details.

[3] System Program Expenditure Report, Cooperative Library Systems, 1979-80, page 2, actual system reference workload, total.

[4] King Research, Inc. Survey reports, 1980 estimates.

[5] Includes funds for SIRCULS.

[6] Includes funds for CIN.

[7] 1978-79 data. Failed to provide requested 1979-80 data.

[8] Financial data for all single-jurisdiction systems from System Program Expenditure Report, Cooperative Library Systems, 1979-80. Single-jurisdiction systems by definition do not do intra-system reference. Their inter-system reference volume is negligible.

TABLE 14. TOTAL REFERENCE EXPENDITURES, 1979-80

	Cooperative Systems[1]	Single-jurisdiction Systems[2]	BARC and SCAN[3]	TOTAL
Question-answering Expenditures	$ 573,730	NA	$501,410	$1,081,140
Materials	$ 220,946	$ 84,401	-	$ 305,347
Other Reference Support	$ 383,712	$ 86,055	$235,390	$ 705,254
Total Reference Expenditures	$1,178,388	$170,456	$736,800	$2,085,644
Questions	38,066	NA	7,207	45,273
Question-answering Expenditures per Question	$ 15.23	NA	$ 69.57	$ 23.88
Total Expenditures per Capita[4]	$ .06	$ .05	$ .03	$ .09

[1] California Library System Report 1980. Question-answering expenditures are computed in Table 12, Reference Expenditures by Budget Category, 1979-80.

[2] System Program Expenditure Report, Cooperative Library Systems, 1980.

[3] LSCA Award Letters

[4] Population bases used for per capita calculations are: Cooperative Systems -- total of estimated populations reported in KRI Survey (21,384,380): Single jurisdiction Systems-- total of jurisdiction populations reported in California Library Statistics and Directory 1980 (3,807,900): BARC and SCAN and total - estimated state population from California Library Statistics and Directory 1980 (22,471,000).

Without studying each of the Systems in depth, it is difficult to say why the costs vary so. We did study in more detail the three Systems visited, North State, Peninsula, and Serra, and from what we learned there we can generalize some about the causes of differences in costs:

1. Differences in counting and reporting. After talking with several of the Systems, we concluded that the reports on the number of questions answered are unreliable.

2. Differences in System operation. The level of System reference activity varies tremendously. Some Systems perform extensive searches on each question before referring them elsewhere, some only check a central collection. Several of the System reference centers are also serving the non-public libraries of an intertype network; about one-quarter of the questions answered by the Black Gold Information Center, for example, are for non-public TIE libraries.

3. Differences in System resources. In a System where local libraries are small and lack reference resources, the questions referred are often relatively simple, taking little time to answer. On the other hand, a System with few resources might also have difficulty answering questions within the System for the same reason that the local libraries have difficulty: the needed resources are not readily available.

4. Differences in salaries. Questions answered by entry-level reference librarians will cost less than those answered by experienced reference coordinators, even though some of the difference will be made up by the increased ability of the latter.

The cost per question answered at BARC and SCAN is considerably higher than for the Systems, on average; $69 per question in 1979-80. There are several explanations for this, which relate both to the time required to answer each question and the cost per unit of time:

1. BARC and SCAN get the questions that the Systems cannot answer, which means that they are much more difficult, on the average, and more likely to require a large amount of staff time per question. In the last few years, in particular, the Systems' capabilities have grown tremendously as a result of the reference support activity, such as training, that has taken place; the enhancement of local collections with CLSA funds; and the example of BARC and SCAN. The questions that do get to the tertiary level are the most complex ones. Looking at the staff time for question-answering and the number of questions answered, we estimate that BARC and SCAN spend roughly one-half day on each question.

2. BARC and SCAN have much more complex libraries in which to do their searches than do the System staff. They have more resources to use, but they also have more resources from which to winnow out what they need. The result is that question-answering in these libraries may be more time-consuming.

3. BARC and SCAN staff are highly-skilled; they tend to remain with the center for a long time, which means that their salaries are higher; and they are in urban areas, where salaries and the cost of living are higher than in the rural areas.

4. Many of the System reference librarians seem to have a lot of interaction with their member libraries, asking libraries to check their collections for answers to many of the questions

referred to the System level. This shifts some of the question-answering effort from the System to the member libraries. This does not seem to be the case with the tertiary level reference centers.

The libraries of the State also contribute to the costs of interlibrary reference, by answering questions on referral from other libraries. Their services are contributed in-kind. In Table 8 we estimated that 9,200 referred questions were answered by public and non-public libraries around the State. If it is assumed that the value of their contribution is roughly the average System expenditure on question-answering, $15, this would amount to an additional $138,000, or the equivalent of 13 percent of the total funded question-answering effort.

As with the costs of direct reference service, our figures for support service costs must be used with caution. Reference support is usually performed by the same individuals who perform direct reference services. Their allocation of effort between the two will depend on a variety of factors, and may differ markedly from one period to another.

Table 15 shows the division of reference expenditures between question-answering and reference support services. The cooperative Systems are spending about 33 percent of their total reference budgets on training and other non-materials reference support activities, and about 19 percent on materials. Because the single-jurisdiction Systems engage in very little question-answering for other Systems and, by definition, none within their own System (their "intra-System" reference activity is only local reference), all of their System reference expenditures fall into reference support.

The total expenditure of System funds on materials is over $300,000. This compares with an estimated total materials expenditure by the public libraries of the State of $29.4 million in 1980.[10]

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[10] From the State Librarian's Desk 86 (December 1980), p. 3.

TABLE 15. TOTAL COOPERATIVE SYSTEM REFERENCE EXPENDITURES, BY FUNCTION, 1979-80

System	Question-Answering[1]	Reference Support Salaries, Operating, and Equipment[2]	Reference Support Materials[3]	Total System Reference Expenditur
BALIS	$ 0	$ 35,431	$ 31,832	$ 67,263
Black Gold	84,354	9,373	2,336	96,063
49-99	30,797	13,199	2,635	46,631
Inland	43,681	34,321	20,660	98,662
MCLS	42,818	42,818	745	86,381
MOBAC	20,161	6,721	5,910	32,792
MVLS	56,062	6,230	29,338	91,630
North Bay	24,591	22,701	4,887	52,179
North State	33,625	14,412	28,000	76,037
Peninsula	14,900	34,769	3,600	53,269
SJVLS	56,398	37,599	7,227	101,224
Santiago[4]	18,928	27,238	10,846	57,012
Serra	85,713	57,143	4,997	147,853
South Bay	52,829	28,447	4,300	85,576
South State	8,873	13,310	63,633	85,816
Subtotals	$573,730	$383,712	$220,946	$1,178,388
Single-jurisdiction Systems[5]				
Long Beach	-	$ 402	$ 11,561	$ 11,963
Los Angeles	-	40,971	72,840	113,811
San Francisco	-	44,682	-	44,682
Totals	$573,730	$469,767	$305,347	$1,348,844

SOURCE:

[1] From Table 12 , Reference Expenditures by Budget Category. Computation method: (Salary + Operating + Equipment) X Question-answering as percent of total reference effort.

[2] Computation: That percentage of salaries, operating and equipment expenditures not designated as question-answering.

[3] California Library System Reports, 1980.

[4] 1978-79 data. Failed to provide requested 1979-80 data.

[5] System Program Expenditure Reports, Cooperative Library Systems, 1979-80.

3.5 Conclusions: The Current Reference Referral Network

Based on our analysis of data and observations, we have come to the following conclusions about how well the current network is meeting the needs of the libraries and the citizens of the State and the implications of our findings for future network design.

3.5.1 Performance

The reference referral network is providing both question-answering and reference support services. The network is handling about 40,000 questions referred beyond the local library each year. About 30,000 of these are answered by a source specifically funded for question-answering. Questions are routed through a complicated network which re-refers unanswered questions until about 95 percent of them are ultimately answered. Sixty-seven percent of the questions are answered within the System in which they originated. The rest are referred to a variety of sources including other public and non-public libraries.

This 95 percent completion rate is very high, and in keeping with the priorities of the librarians who use the network. However, this unusually thorough service does result in high costs and long turnaround times. Eighty-eight percent of the questions are answered within one month of the initial referral; respondents to our library survey would prefer that this be within two weeks. From the library user's point of view we agree that one month is too long to wait for an answer to a reference question. The major change required in current network operations, then, is a reduction in the time required to get the answer back to the client.

The quality of the answers provided to referred questions is good, although not as good as the State's public librarians believe.

We found considerable variation among the Systems of the State in the proportion of questions answered within the System, the proportion of questions never answered at all, and turnaround time. Based on our discussions with librarians in the reference centers and those who use their services, as well as the other parts of our evaluation of the network, we concluded that reference is done best by those who do much of it; experience develops expertise. Therefore, reference activity is better concentrated than dispersed, and there are both economy of scale and improvement of quality arguments for reference centers.

Having some person, such as a reference coordinator, responsible for coordinated reference within a System generally improves the quality of service simply because without that person no one performs that function. System coordinators now have too many other responsibilities and lack the direct contact with the System's total reference effort.

Referral staff must be chosen according to their ability to perform the job. Systems and centers should be free to choose the best person for a given position, regardless of where they find him or her.

To avoid conflicting demands, referral staff should report to the System or reference center, and not to the host library, nor should they have dual reporting responsibilities. Their time should belong exclusively to the System or center.

The reference center must have enough staff to provide some flexibility in scheduling and task assignments. Prompt answers to questions, especially those with deadlines, requires this flexibility.

The referral staff must also have ready access to adequate collection resources. The referral librarian provides the referring libraries with professional time and expertise, and access to other collections. If the collection with which she or he works is inadequate, resulting in a high proportion of questions referred on to the next level, the contribution of the secondary level is outweighed by the delays imposed on questions that must be referred further.

Questions are answered faster and at less cost at the lower levels of the network. Sending a question to BARC or SCAN adds considerably to the time and the cost. Turnaround time can be reduced in two ways: the question can go more directly to the source of the ultimate answer, or it can spend less time at each node within the network.

The extent and quality of reference support services is more variable. Libraries within the network place a higher priority on question-answering than on support services, but support services offer the prospect of improving the local library's reference services and its ability to make rapid, appropriate referrals, which considerably improves the quality of service to the individual user. The support service most discussed by the public librarians of the State is training. Because the quality of reference service depends so heavily on the capabilities of the person providing the service, training is crucial, and despite some notably successful efforts there remains a great unmet need.

Very little of the reference network's activity is geared specifically toward meeting the needs of the underserved. Most of what is taking place is at the level of the local library. On the network level, the problem is at least partially due to a lack of resources, both collection and monetary. Meeting the special needs of the underserved requires access to materials for them, for example in languages other than English for the non- and limited-English speaking, and materials delivered to the handicapped, institutionalized, and shut-in. The current forms of interlibrary cooperation are particularly well-suited to the geographically isolated, since they bring them materials from all over the State. The needs of other underserved groups are more for basic information services, which are the responsibility of the local library, and which are not well-met by the network.

3.5.2 Costs

The Systems' reference expenditures in 1979-80 totaled $1.3 million, including the single-jurisdiction Systems. When we add in the costs of BARC and SCAN the total network reference expenditure comes to $2.1 million. The libraries of the State are contributing in-kind staff time for answering questions for other libraries worth approximately $138,000, bringing the total expenditures from all sources, including in-kind, to over $2.2 million. In 1979-80, CLSA funded $1.3 million of this.

The cooperative Systems spend 49 percent of their total on question-answering, the rest on reference support, including $300,000 for materials. BARC and SCAN together spend nearly 80 percent of their budgets for question-answering. The direct reference cost per question averages $15 at the System level and $69 at BARC and SCAN.

Costs are highly variable among the Systems. A number of factors contribute to these differences, including differences in the kinds of questions that are being referred, in the resources available to answer them, and in the System's own operations and policies. BARC and SCAN as the highest level of the network get the questions not answered at the System level, which includes the most difficult questions. The current policy that every question deserves an answer adds to the costs, but is also responsible for the high proportion of questions answered and the high proportion of answers that are complete and correct.

4. ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO REFERENCE REFERRAL SERVICES

The previous chapter summarized what we learned about the current reference referral network. The present chapter evaluates alternative designs for the future network.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of various network designs, we have to state explicitly the goals of the network, and the functions that it should perform and the services it should deliver. Making cost-effectiveness comparisons among alternative approaches requires that we have some reasonable estimates of the costs and effectiveness of each. This is more difficult than it may appear. Projecting the costs and effectiveness of designs that have not yet been implemented requires that we extrapolate from what is known about the current network. The less precise our information about the current network, and the more the other alternatives depart from the current one, the less reliable are our estimates of the costs and effectiveness of the alternative designs.

In choosing among alternative designs, we can strive to maximize effectiveness at a given cost, or we can minimize cost for a given level of effectiveness. For purposes of this study, we will fix the cost of providing reference referral service at the level of the current network and compare the alternatives on the basis of their estimated effectiveness.

In order to estimate the future performance of alternative designs, we have to have some picture of the environment in which the network will be operating and the demands made upon it. Information needs and resources are changing; to make use of those resources to meet those needs, the network must change too.

In the discussion that follows, we begin by discussing expected future developments that are of significance in designing the network. We then define goals, criteria, and performance standards for the network, based on the information that we have collected about librarians' expectations of the present network and its strengths and weaknesses. We then develop and evaluate alternative designs, and make recommendations.

4.1 The Future Network Environment

The role of the public library traditionally has been to insure the availability of basic knowledge to all persons within its jurisdiction. We expect that most public libraries have not and probably will not substantially redefine their basic mission in the decade ahead. Innovations in technology will expand the range of materials available to users, the speed with which they may be obtained, and their format. Institutional changes will be the result of changing concepts of "availability" and increased attention to equality of access to information resources for all citizens, including those currently underserved.

The information needs of individuals will continue to be complex and draw upon a variety of sources. A summation issued following the recent White House Conference on Library and Information Services offered the following conclusions about the information needs of Americans:

> People want accurate information to guide them in making intelligent decisions about issues that concern them. They want to know how to find the government services they need to solve their problems. They want information on how to adapt to the rapid changes taking place in their environment. They want to expand their knowledge and range of choices through education.[1]

A growing emphasis on planning and evaluating library services in terms of meeting user needs rather than satisfying external standards has led to a rethinking of "availability." For library materials to be truly available, the public must know that they exist, what they are, where they are, which ones are most appropriate to meet their needs, and how to use them. They must also be able to obtain them simply, without undue time and effort.

The increased volume, complexity, and expense of basic information resources and the growing importance of information in all phases of people's lives has necessitated changes in some traditional ways of thinking about availability of information. As more and more information resources are needed and produced, individual libraries cannot hope to own them all. Autonomous, self-sufficient libraries of any type are a goal of the past. Single libraries cannot afford to purchase, process and store all materials needed by their users. Resource sharing networks and technology will play an increasingly important role in enabling public libraries to supply their patrons with the information or materials required to meet their needs.

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[1] White House Conference on Library and Information Services, 1979, Summary, Washington, D.C., GPO, 1980, p. 13.

A second important factor related to availability will be the increased competition from other information providers. The growth in information resources and the even faster growth in information technology has resulted in a variety of means for delivering information directly into the home. The electronic delivery of information into the home via teletext and viewdata systems and home computers may bring about fundamental changes in the information-seeking behavior of people. Public libraries can no longer limit the information resources that they use to traditional published sources. Information comes in all forms, and to fulfill its mission the library cannot limit itself to information in printed sources. Although public libraries have been slower to act on this philosophy than to espouse it,[2] we have seen a gradual move toward a more comprehensive definition of public library information services, for example, with the introduction of Information and Referral services, a trend that we expect to continue.

The emphasis on access to information for all population groups will also continue. Despite the efforts of the 1960's and 70's, some groups remain underserved, and as information becomes increasingly important in our society these groups' needs will have to be met.

In summary, libraries will face new challenges in the next decade. The kinds of services that public libraries provide will change, but in a gradual, evolutionary way, as the public library seeks to better fulfill its mission as a vital information source for the community.

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[2] Thomas Childers, "The Future of Reference and Information Service in the Public Library," Library Quarterly 48:4 (1978) pp. 463-75.

The library will tap more information resources, printed and otherwise, within the local library, other libraries, and from other sources; it will provide more personal assistance in linking information needs with resources; and it will improve services to the underserved. Innovations in technology will expand the range of materials available to users, the speed with which they may be obtained, and the formats in which they will be produced.

If the public library does not expand its information-providing role, other organizations will step in to take its place. The same technology that will help public libraries to better serve their users, if they take advantage of it, will make information more readily accessible to the individual. What is different about the public library is that it is free, providing information to those who cannot afford it, or who not knowing its value — information is unique among commodities in that the consumer cannot evaluate its worth until she or he has it — do not seek it out. Another major strength of the library is that only it has the role of linking the user with the information resource, regardless of the source of information. This personalized service, which is at the heart of reference service, will become increasingly important.

Finally, the library covers the entire range of information, whereas commercial services concentrate on that which is most in demand. The objective of the private sector is to provide those services that are financially feasible; of the public sector, to provide those that are needed, even if they are needed by very few people who cannot afford to pay. Even in this era of proliferating commercial information services, then, we see a role for the public library in providing personal assistance and access to unusual and difficult-to-obtain information.

What remains to be seen, in these post-Proposition 13 days, is whether local public libraries will have the resources to provide the needed level of service. Library budgets have never been generous, but now they are more limited than ever. For libraries to meet the needs of their communities requires that they provide the most cost-effective services possible, including avoiding unnecessary duplication of resources and effort and swiftly locating the most appropriate source of information for a user. Resource sharing will be a major tool for libraries to accomplish these ends.

It is in this context that the reference referral network will operate: an increasing need for information; a growing array of information resources; an expanding definition of the kinds of information that the public library should provide; increasing attempts to reach the underserved; a growing emphasis on direct library-user interaction; proliferation of useful (and probably expensive) information technology; and a changing definition of availability. Libraries will be less able to acquire and store needed information and will increasingly have to be able to locate it elsewhere and deliver it within a reasonable period of time. The reference referral network will be a major tool to help libraries locate and transmit needed information from all different resources and deliver it directly to the patron as quickly and conveniently as possible.

4.2 Projected Network Activity

The previous section discussed the environment within which the network will have to be operated, and its probable effects on the kinds of library services needed by the community and, therefore, the kinds of demands made upon the reference referral network. This section looks more closely at our expectations for the demands to be placed upon the network.

To design a network to meet future needs, we have to look at both the kinds of questions that will be posed and the volume of activity. To do this, we have to project past trends and consider the effects on those trends of the future developments described in the preceding section. Librarians who have worked within the network over the years were consistent in their assessments of the change in the nature of the questions referred over the past years. However, our efforts to estimate the change over time in the total volume of activity were frustrated by two problems: 1) changes and inconsistencies in the way that the data are reported; 2) the effects of Proposition 13.

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In trying to track the trends in reference activity within the network over the last few years, we had two sources of data: the total volume of reference transactions in local libraries, as they report them to the State Library which publishes them in the annual California Library Statistics and Directory; and the volume of Systems' reference activity, as reported on their annual California Library Systems Reports. In comparing the figures reported over the years, and looking at individual Systems and library figures, we concluded that the data reported is so unreliable as to make projections impossible, for the following reasons:

1. The reports are not accompanied by instructions or definitions. In talking with several Systems and libraries, we found considerable discrepancies in how they interpreted the data categories. For example, the System report asks for "Actual System Reference Workload." Some Systems only count questions that come to System-paid reference staff; some include questions referred by member libraries to other sources, which do not go through System staff; some include only questions handled by some System staff members, but not all of them. In the library reports, we found one library that reported answering ten times as many questions on referral from other libraries as for its own patrons.

2. In the System reports, the data reporting categories have changed over time, so no comparable time series data exists.

On our library survey, we asked for data on reference activity. However, we were collecting data on questions already answered, so we could only ask for the data already compiled for the state reports, and our data suffered from the same flaws.

Another difficulty with measuring trends in reference service in California over the last few years is the effect of Proposition 13, which was passed in June, 1978. Proposition 13 had severe, immediate effects on public libraries in California. Its long-term effects remain to be seen.

Proposition 13 had a deleterious effect on interlibrary reference. The Systems and BARC and SCAN did not have their budgets cut, and so they tried to assist local libraries in maintaining the quality of reference service by reducing their constraints on questions to be referred; for example, allowing questions to be sent in without an exhaustive search at the local library. However, local libraries had their hours and their staffs cut, overall, so they had less time in which to take referrals and fewer staff members to do so. The net result was a sharp decrease in the total level of interlibrary reference. The decrease was temporary, however, and interlibrary reference activity appears to have returned to its pre-Proposition 13 levels.

Interviewees around the State told us that the quality of reference service at the local and System levels has increased steadily with the development of Systems and the reference referral network as a whole. This is apparently due to several factors:

1. Increased training.
2. The development of reference collections.
3. More frequent use of non-public libraries and other information resources.
4. The role model effects of the reference centers which creatively use a multitude of information resources.
5. Peer pressure for better reference service from within the referral network.

We expect the following factors to affect the volume of activity within the reference referral network:

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1. The population of the State continues to grow, creating an increasing need for library services. However, the limited availability of services will depress the actual questions received and referred as long as local public libraries continue to suffer from the effects of inflation and budget cuts. The State Library estimates that public library income in California in real dollars declined by 19 percent from 1978 to 1980.[3] The number of library outlets declined 8 percent, staff members declined 10 percent; and circulation, the most universal measure of use, declined 10 percent.

2. We noted earlier that the increasing use of bibliographic utilities and the development of the California Statewide Database will reduce the number of bibliographic queries referred through the network slowly over the next few years. The impact of increased bibliographic access on the total network will be slight, although in some Systems of the smaller Systems, the effect will be significant.

3. Continued improvement in the quality of service within the network should encourage both users and librarians to refer more questions.

4. Improvements at every level of the network should mean that more questions will be answered at lower levels of the network, but that the questions that are referred further will be more difficult and time-consuming to answer.

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[3] From the State Librarian's Desk 86 (December 1980) p. 3. Figures compiled from the California Library Statistics and Directory, 1981.

Some of these trends will act to increase the number of questions referred, some to decrease them, and some to increase the difficulty of the questions referred. Without comparable historical data and with the uncertainty about the availability of local library services, it is difficult to project the volume of activity. We have to go with our best estimates based on all of this information. We therefore assume that the level of activity within the network will increase by five percent per year, assuming that the difficulty of the questions received will remain constant. We could also assume that the number of questions will remain constant, but their difficulty (i.e., the time required to answer them) will increase by five percent per year, and the result would be the same. The actual change may be somewhere in between.

Based on our estimates of the current level of activity, that gives us the figures in Table 16. By 1984-85, the total number of questions referred through the network will reach 51,100.

TABLE 16. PROJECTED NUMBER OF QUESTIONS REFERRED TO NETWORK

1980-81	42,000
1981-82	44,100
1982-83	46,300
1983-84	48,600
1984-85	51,100

4.3 Mission and Goals

The major need of the public libraries of the State from the reference referral network is assistance in using the resources of all the State in the answering of reference questions.

As we noted above, individual libraries cannot hope to answer all the needs of their clientele. It is only through resource sharing that they can hope to meet even a significant portion of their needs. And effective resource-sharing across jurisdictional lines requires higher-level coordination and funding.

The California Library Services Act acknowledges a State interest in ensuring equitable access to information for all citizens of the State, and for effective use of all the State's information resources. Generally, interjurisdictional aid is justified when:

1. There are significant differences in local jurisdictions' abilities to provide important services, resulting in inequities.

2. More cost-beneficial service can be provided in larger units than by the individual jurisdictions acting independently.

3. The benefits of the services provided by one jurisdiction spill over to residents of other jurisdictions.

Library services have been traditionally a local responsibility. However, with the growing importance of resource sharing and interlibrary cooperation for the efficient provision of library services, state and Federal governments have assumed a role in supporting and expediting interjurisdictional library services. Although the direct provision of information services to the citizen remains primarily a local responsibility, it is the State's responsibility to ensure that 1) all citizens of the State have access to at least a minimum level of information services, and 2) the resources of the State are used to the maximum extent possible, to reduce unnecessary duplication of materials and effort and maximize the level of information services available from the available resources.

With these principles in mind-- the need for resource sharing, and the role of the State in ensuring equitable and effective service across the State-- and considering the needs of the libraries of the State for assistance in meeting the information needs of their communities, we can set the following goals for the reference referral network:

1. To provide thorough, accurate, and prompt answers to all reference questions not answered within the local library.

2. To make available to all citizens all the information resources of the state, in whatever form.

3. To make the best possible use of existing information resources, rather than duplicating them.

4. To back up the local library, but not to supplant it - basic reference service remains primarily a local responsibility. The network serves users through the local public library.

5. To strengthen the local library, improving its capability to answer questions in-house without having to refer them.

6. To be efficient, i.e., to meet its performance objectives at the lowest possible cost.

7. To be equitable to citizens throughout the State.

8. To ensure that referable questions are indeed referred by being encouraging, hospitable, and easy to use.

These are not the only goals of the libraries and Systems of the State; we are talking only about their reference component. The local libraries' reference goals would be different.

The proposed network must meet the information needs of all the citizens of the State in an era of rapid advances in information technology. In keeping with the trend toward making effective use of existing information resources, rather than duplicating them, the network must be geared toward identifying, locating, and drawing on information wherever it exists, and in whatever form. It is no longer practical to think in terms of any one library or even any one set of libraries being the ultimate repository of needed information. Instead, the role of the network should be to locate the needed information wherever it exists and deliver it in a timely manner to the client, wherever he or she may be. The local library remains responsible for direct service to the client and for basic information services; the role of the network is to back up the local library.

The goals of the network require a policy decision. It is not our role to make policy for the network. However, in order to evaluate alternative network designs, we had to make some assumptions about what are the goals of the network, so we derived these goals from our discussions with the California library community and from the survey responses.

These goals served as the criteria against which we evaluated the effectiveness of alternative network configurations. For each alternative, we estimated the extent to which it would promote (or detract from) these goals.

In order to attain its goals, the reference referral network needs to perform the following functions:

1. Question-Answering

2. Reference Support
    - Training
        - Of Trainers
        - In Using the Network
        - In Basic Reference
        - In Advanced Reference
    - Creation of Reference Tools
        - Finding Tools, e.g., Directories, Union Lists
        - Reference Aids, e.g., Indexes, Updates
    - Coordination and Communication

Interlibrary cooperation as a whole is not limited to these functions. We are speaking specifically of reference-related activities; the libraries of the State are engaged in many other valuable cooperative activities. It is possible that other functions may be developed that contribute to the goals of the network. The criteria against which any proposed functions or strategies are to be evaluated is their contribution to the networks' mission and goals as presented in Section 3.2; these are the possible functions which we have identified which contribute the most toward them.

4.4 Evaluation Criteria and Performance Standards

In order to evaluate alternative network designs, we need to predict how well they will meet the goals of the network set forth above. From these goals and from our assessment of the current network and of other reference services, we have developed additional criteria to help with this evaluation:

1. Reference is done best by those who do much of it; experience develops expertise. Therefore, reference activity is better concentrated than dispersed.

2. Question-answering can be performed more quickly and at less cost at the lower levels of the network closer to the point of origin.

3. The question-answerer must have enough staff to provide some flexibility in scheduling and task assignments. Prompt answers to questions, especially those with deadlines, requires this flexibility.

4. The referral staff must have ready access to adequate collection and other resources. If the collection to which a question is referred is inadequate, resulting in a high proportion of questions unanswered, its contribution is outweighed by the delays imposed on questions that must be referred further.

5. The more quickly the question goes to the ultimate source of the answer, the shorter the turnaround time. This can be accomplished either by improving the referring librarian's information about where to send a question, or by moving questions through the various possible sources more quickly.

6. In a multi-level network, each component should have clearly-defined responsibilities, based on the concepts of fiscal federalism, as set forth in Section 3.3. For reference referral, the appropriate division of responsibilities is:

Level	Responsibilities for Question-Answering
Local	Basic service User contact
System	Intermediate reference Filtering Switching
Statewide Centers	High-level reference
State Library	As collection and other resources are appropriate

Because the network is State-funded, we also need to apply to our alternatives criteria for appropriate State aid programs. In a study of library cooperation funding alternatives to the Public Library Services Act (PLSA), Lawrence[4] identified the following criteria for State aid programs:

1. The extent to which the allocation is based on the need of the receiving jurisdiction, which is often measured by population and population density;
2. The extent to which ability (usually represented by assessed valuation) is taken into account;
3. Whether the formula encourages local effort (represented by tax rate equivalent);
4. Whether the funding formula is simple to understand and to administer;
5. The stability of the funds, so that recipients can predict their income from one year to the next;
6. Whether the funding mechanism is equitable;
7. The incentives to cooperation provided by the program;
8. The political feasibility of the allocation mechanism, that is, the extent to which it will be acceptable to all parties.

To his list we can add one more:

9. The reference program must be consistent with the other components of CLSA, so that different components are not working at cross-purposes.

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[4] Lawrence, Gary S. The Allocation of State Funds to Public Library Systems in California. DLS Dissertation, School of Library and Information Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1980.

We were also asked to design performance standards for the network. Performance standards serve as objectives, that is, as measurable ends to be achieved. They are quantifications, or operationalizations, of the network's goals. For question-answering, we can define performance standards in terms of the number of questions answered, accuracy and completeness of answer provided, and time required.

The performance standards for the network as a whole require a policy decision. The basic question is the extent to which the network is to go to answer unanswered questions. The librarians with whom we talked and who replied to our survey felt very strongly that the network should strive to answer all questions, and accurately and quickly. Based on the survey responses, we have defined the following performance standards for the network's question-answering:

Performance Standard 1: The network must answer completely and correctly at least 95 percent of all the questions referred.

Performance Standard 2: 90 percent of all questions referred must be answered within 2 weeks.

Survey respondents placed a higher priority on the number of questions answered and on the quality of the answers provided than on turnaround time; accordingly, Performance Standard 1 is of higher priority than Performance Standard 2.

The above standards are for the network as a whole: that is, for all of its components taken together. In addition, the Systems have a major role in reference referral. Even if under the new network design the Systems themselves are not service-providers, the System do define geographical and cooperative units within which library services are provided. Furthermore, if the Systems are to be funded for reference referral, as they are currently, standards are needed to ensure that each System is meeting its responsibilities to its residents and to the network as a whole, providing adequate service and not shifting the burden of question-answering to the rest of the network. The proportion of questions answered and the turnaround time currently varies considerably among the Systems. We have therefore identified the following performance standard for System level of the network:

Performance Standard 3: At least 80 percent of the questions referred must be answered within the System.

Because local libraries are a key element in the network, we would also like to be able to define performance standards for them, to ensure that they are meeting their responsibilities to their local users and not making excessive demands on the network as a whole. However, enforcing similar standards at the local level would be impossible, since it would depend on self-reporting of the activity at the local reference desk. Local libraries are responsible to the community that funds them; it is up to the community to ensure that it is receiving adequate service from its own library.

These performance standards should be reviewed after one year, and again after two years, to decide whether they should be modified.

4.5 Description of Alternative Designs

In formulating alternative network designs, we were asked to look at two broad classes of designs: organization-based, that is, specifying the institutional arrangements under which the network is to operate; and formula-based, which has no fixed structure but instead provides financial incentives and compensation for network participants.

Any new designs also have to be evaluated against the present network, for two reasons. First, the present network is one for which costs and levels of performances are known. In evaluating proposed designs, we are estimating both of these measures. It is more meaningful and more accurate to state these as comparisons with what is known. Second, the current network is in place. Any change would require cost and effort, both in making the changes and in training librarians and users. We found that the librarians who use the network are generally well-pleased with the network's performance, implying that changes should be made only if we expect improvements to result. We would also expect the network participants to resist any changes which they feel are unnecessary, if only because they are satisfied with the current network and would fear that a change would be for the worse.

Because question-answering is, in the evaluation of the public libraries of the state, a far more important network function than reference support services, we developed our designs around the question-answering function. We will discuss later how the support services can best be provided within the confines of each design.

In determining the level of performance and of funding of alternative designs, we can either hold the cost constant and design for the most effective possible service, or we can hold constant the measures of effectiveness — in this case, our performance standards for turnaround time and proportion of questions answered — and vary the cost. It is difficult to determine the cost of an improvement in effectiveness without actually observing the result of varying the cost of the network. We would expect decreasing returns to scale in reference service: if it costs a fixed amount to answer 90 percent of the questions referred, for example, we would expect it to cost substantially more to answer the last 10 percent, since those would be the most difficult (and therefore expensive) questions to answer. What is more realistic is for us to extrapolate the effectiveness of alternative designs relative to that of the present network, given the present level of expenditure. If the level of effectiveness of the best alternative is less than is desired, then additional expenditure is required.

In the alternatives that follow, we are assuming that the total expenditures on the reference network remain the same at $2.1 million in 1980 dollars. Note that this is not just the State funded expenditures, because as we showed in discussing the costs of the present network, a substantial portion of them are currently paid from other sources.

4.5.1 Reference Referral in Other States

We began our search for other reference referral models by investigating how other states organize and fund their ILR efforts. We performed a literature search and asked knowledgeable individuals about the states that were known to have a significant ILR component to their network activity. The states discussed below were those identified as the most likely to provide us with an alternative model. In many states there simply is no organized interlibrary reference effort.

Specific information concerning reference referral procedures, costs, and system design in various states is a challenge to obtain. One apparent reason for this lack of information is that many states do not distinguish interlibrary loan and interlibrary reference in either system design or statistical reporting. ILR requests are translated into ILL title or subject requests at the local library and sent through whatever channels exist in this form. The reasons for this, as well as the consequences, are thoughtfully spelled out in a recent article by Candace Morgan.[5]

She suggested that one reason ILL may be used as a substitute for ILR is that reference librarians feel referring a question may admit incompetence, while a materials request only admits a lack of local resources. She also noted that the existence of union catalogs encourages the ILL alternative by making it more convenient.

Such a system exists in Maryland, where county public library systems send ILR requests translated into ILL subject requests, through MILO (Maryland Inter-Library Loan), the state interlibrary loan network, to Enoch Pratt Free Library, the designated state resource center. Pratt is allotted $3 million annually to serve as the resource center. If the request cannot be filled at Pratt, it is sent to other libraries, including academic libraries in the state. The academic and other libraries which are net lenders at the end of the fiscal year bill the state for their costs, as determined by the libraries themselves. In 1979-80, the system handled approximately 320,000 requests, 3 to 4 percent of which were subject or reference requests.

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[5] Candace D. Morgan, "Cooperative Reference: Hazards, Rewards, Prospects," Reference Quarterly (Summer 1979).

Illinois does have a separate reference referral network. Carefully documented in the June 1975 Illinois Libraries, the system works as follows. Public libraries refer questions to the public library system of which they are a member. If the question is unanswered, it goes on to one of the four Research and Reference Centers - three academic libraries plus Chicago Public. If even further referral is required, one of the three Special Research Centers (John Crerar Library, University of Chicago, and Northwestern University) receives the question.

There is no specific costing out of reference service within the system. The same libraries which act as ILR resource centers function as ILL resource centers also. Each Research and Reference Center is given $15,000 annually plus $.40 for each search done (ILL or ILR) and $4.20 for each fill (ILL or ILR). Each Special Research Center receives an annual grant of $3,000. It is recognized that this formula does not reflect actual costs and may be inappropriate for ILR as it is not related to actual search time.[6] A further concern is that many libraries now belong to OCLC and are doing ILL based on OCLC location information rather than going through the system. Only Research and Reference Centers are eligible for reimbursement, however. Efforts are being made to change the current funding formula.

Pennsylvania distinguishes ILR requests from ILL, but does not break out ILR for costing or budget purposes. The reference referral flow goes from public libraries to one of 27 district library centers, and then to one of four regional resource centers. These regional resource centers each cover subject specialties rather than serving designated geographical areas. For example, questions concerning music are all sent to Philadelphia Free Library regardless of the origin of the query. Under a recently enacted state aid funding formula, the district centers receive $.25 per capita based on the populations of their districts. The four Regional Resource Centers receive equal portions of a sum equal to 5% of the total state appropriation.[7] The district centers handled a total of 15,684 ILR requests in 1979. Regional resource centers received 1,019 questions. The funding formula makes no provision for increases or decreases in the workload of either the district or the regional centers.

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[6] Interview with Kathryn Gesterfield, Director, Illinois State Library.

New York State's 3Rs System provides an interlibrary reference track similar to that in Pennsylvania. Referral paths vary somewhat statewide, but the general system design is as follows. There are twenty-two public library systems, each with a designated central library, which act as initial referral points. Unanswered requests then go on to one of the nine Reference and Research Library Resources Systems. Reference questions travel the route as ILL subject requests. The central libraries of the public library systems receive $.13 per capita based on the population of the system area, plus a $45,000 block grant for the purchase of materials. As in other states, the aid is designed to support ILL as well as ILR. Reference and research library resources systems each receive an annual block grant of $120,000. No statistics are kept on a statewide basis which would indicate the volume of reference referral transactions passing through the system annually.[8]

The information from these four states is summarized in Table 17.

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[7] Interview with Elliot Shelkrot, Pennsylvania State Librarian, and David Hellman, Pennsylvania State Library staff.

[8] Interview with Jane Rollins, NYSILL.

TABLE 17. REFERENCE REFERRAL IN FOUR STATES, 1979-80.

State	Distinct ILR Network	Separate ILR Budget/Costing	Volume of Transactions	Allocation of Funds
Maryland	No	No	Estimate: 3 to 4% of the 320,000 ILL count or about 10,000.	Includes ILL. $3 million annually to Enoch Pratt Free Library-State Resource Center. ILL net lenders bill state for their costs at end of fiscal year.
Illinois	Yes	No	Estimate: 16-18% of the 733,612 total. ILL count about 110,041.	Includes ILL. Each Research and Reference Center receives $15,000 annually plus $.40 for each search and $4.20 for each ILL or ILR fill. Approx. $.06 per capita total expenditure.
Pennsylvania	Yes	No	15,684-district library centers 1,019-regional resource centers	Includes ILL. District library centers (27). $.25 per capita for residents of district. Regional resource centers. Each receives one fourth of a sum equal to 5% of the total state aid allocation.
New York	Yes	No	No ILR records kept at the statewide level.	Includes ILL. Central libraries of public library systems (22). $.13 per capita plus $45,000 block grant. Reference and research library resources systems $120,000 annual block grant each. No statewide data.

This sample of reference referral patterns provides some useful insights. There is an almost total lack of specific cost information about interlibrary reference. Funding formulas are based on population size and lump sum figures rather than on what the service may cost. Attempts to arrive at formulas which fluctuate based on actual traffic are problematic. Should the reward be for effort or for success? How can fair distinctions be made between search costs in a large library and search costs for small specialized collections? Should a library be compensated for contributing to an answer, but not providing a totally correct and complete response?

Little is known also about numbers of actual reference referrals in many states. In most of the cases cited, reference referral questions are translated into ILL subject requests. Even within that framework, each state seems to have its own record-keeping problems. In Maryland, for example, the number of ILL requests only accounts for about one-third of the volume of materials that go into the delivery system. The assumption is that many requests circumvent the system tally. In addition, the state resource library has a toll free reference number, known only to other libraries. There is apparently no accurate count of the volume of calls received on this line or the disposition of the queries.[9]

In short, very few people know very many specific facts about how much ILR takes place in their states and how much it costs.

4.5.2 The Present Network

The current reference referral network is described and evaluated in detail in Chapters 2 and 3. Briefly, the current network has three levels to it. The user contact takes place in the local library. The second level is the System. System reference configurations differ, with many supporting System reference centers. All have some procedures for performing reference referral within the System. When the question is not answered at the System level, it is referred elsewhere, most often to BARC or to SCAN. In addition, the local library, the System, and BARC and SCAN can at any time call on a number of other libraries and information resources around the State, including the California State Library, and many non-public libraries.

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[9] Interview with Maurice Travillion, Interlibrary Loan Specialist, Maryland State Division of Library Development and Services.

The Systems are funded for reference referral according to baseline budgets: each year's appropriations are based on the previous year's, with Budget Change Proposals submitted to request changes such as the addition of a staff member. The CLSB reviews all the budget requests and Budget Change Proposals and allocates the funds, which are authorized by the legislature by program.

Statewide centers have been authorized in the legislation but not yet funded. The current top level of the network is the metropolitan reference centers, BARC and SCAN, which are special LSCA-funded demonstration projects sponsored by Los Angeles and San Francisco Public Libraries.

4.5.3 Organization-Based Design

An organization-based design specifies the way in which the network is to be organized to perform ILR. The current design is basically an organization-based design that allows each System to choose its own reference referral structure. In order to develop an organization-based design, we looked at various alternatives for each of the three levels of the current network, including the possibility of eliminating each level. By choosing an alternative at each level, we then developed a preferred organization-based design against which to evaluate the other designs.

4.5.3.1 The Local Level

At the local level, the alternatives considered were:

1. The question could continue to enter the network via the local library, as it does now.

2. The question could by-pass the local level, with the user contacting directly a higher level of the network. Instead of the local library taking the user's request and forwarding it, the library would provide users with a phone number to contact a network reference center. This could be a regional or State level reference center, depending on the decisions made about the other levels of the network (see below). The key element is that the local library would no longer be the user's point of contact with the network.

3. The question could be referred by the local level, but the answer sent directly to the requestor from whatever component provides it.

Evaluating the first alternative - the current situation - against the goals of the network developed in Section 4.3, we find the following. Our evaluation of the performance of the current network in Chapter 3 showed that it is providing thorough and accurate answers to nearly all of the questions referred. The promptness of the answers provided, however, needs to be improved. Otherwise, the current strategy of having questions enter the network through the local library meets the network objectives.

The second alternative reduces turnaround time by eliminating one stage in the referral process, the referral from local library to the rest of the network. Questions would be concentrated at a regional or State center that specializes in reference, giving users more timely answers. We have no measure of the quality of the answers provided directly by local libraries, but we would expect these specialized reference centers to provide more accurate and complete answers to questions that are not now referred beyond the local level. Finally, the user himself or herself who would make the decision to go beyond the local library. This would avoid the problems with recalcitrant staff members who avoid making referrals and with disinterested patrons who don't come back to get the results of extensive research on their behalf.

The shortcomings of the second alternative are that it violates several of the Goals outlined in Section 4.3. It does not make the best possible use of existing resources (Goal 3) because the network reference center(s) would undoubtedly receive many questions that could have been answered at the local level. Librarians still tell the story of an ill-conceived publicity campaign for BARC, which resulted in users coming into local libraries and asking that BARC and not the local library answer their questions.

By-passing the local library for entry into the network also violates Goal 4, that the network should reinforce but not supplant the local library. Basic reference service is a local responsibility. The only way to ensure that the network is used for extraordinary requests is to screen the questions that are referred beyond the local level, which currently the local library does.

To a lesser extent this alternative would also violate Goal 5, to strengthen the local library. We have said that reference is done best by those who do much of it. If the network intercepts all the more difficult reference questions (and many of the less difficult ones, as well) local reference capabilities will not develop.

By-passing the local library in providing the answer to the user (Alternative 3) is more realistic. At least one System, Serra, has been experimenting with sending the reply directly to the user in some cases, such as when the question is a straightforward request for copywork. Some local libraries balk at this suggestion, because they fear that the network will ursurp their role, violating Goal 4. The priority, however, should be the most prompt delivery of the appropriate answer to the client. In some cases, it is better for the user to receive the reply from a local librarian who can explain what was done and check to be sure that the individual's need is indeed met by the information provided. In other cases, however, the local library simply adds to the delay. All unnecessary delays must be avoided.

There are circumstances under which the reply should go through the local library, but when the reply can go direct, it should. The local library staff could still be informed of what was done, both to assure them that the question is closed and to educate them so that they may better answer that kind of question next time.

We therefore conclude that under an organization-based design, the local library should be the point at which a query enters the referral network. The answer should be provided to the user in the most timely manner consistent with thorough reference service. That may be directly or through the local library, depending on the individual circumstances.

4.5.3.2 The Intermediate Level

The Systems currently act as the intermediate level of the referral network. The alternatives considered at the System level were:

1. Continuation of the present pattern of widely-varying System configurations, ranging from no reference center to several.
2. One reference center per System.
3. More than one reference center per System.
4. Regional reference centers, not necessarily tied to Systems.
5. No reference center at the System level; all questions not answered at the local level proceed directly to the top level of the network.

System-level reference centers draw on regional information resources, providing prompt, local answers to questions. Eliminating the intermediate level (Alternative 5) would by-pass much of the State's library resources, violating Goal 3, and placing a heavy burden on the top level center(s). We have also found that questions are answered more quickly and at less cost at lower levels of the network (Section 4.4.1, Criterion 2), and that concentrating the reference effort provides better quality service (Criterion 1). Therefore, Alternative 5 is eliminated.

Currently, under Alternative 1, we found in our library survey that Systems without reference centers draw more heavily on the tertiary level and answer fewer questions within their own boundaries. Although the libraries in such Systems are free to draw on one another, in practice we found that they seemed to go directly to the metropolitan centers. As one librarian told us, why go to the other System libraries when BARC or SCAN can answer the question?

The result is that Systems that choose to use their reference funds for other purposes (such as collection development) receive more service from the other components of the network. They are shifting some of the burden for reference referral from the System to the network. This, we feel, is not equitable (Goal 8). In an organization-based design, then, we recommend that every System should have or have access to a System or regional reference center. Alternative 1 is thereby eliminated, along with Alternative 5.

The current reference centers were located where they are for a variety of reasons having to do not only with reference referral but also with local geographical and political considerations, and with other Systems services, such as ILL. Where the reference centers acquire materials with System funds, those are available to patrons for their own use, as well. We are therefore reluctant to recommend elimination or relocation of centers on purely reference grounds. However, we believe that question-answering service can best be provided from reference centers with significant collections and with experienced staff who devote most or all of their time to answering complex reference questions (Criteria 1, 3, and 4).

We therefore recommend that under an organization-based design each System support or have access to a System or regional reference center located in a library with a strong collection; that each center's staff consist of at least two librarians, one of whom may be a reference coordinator; and that the staff be under the jurisdiction of the System administering the center, devoting full-time to System activities.

Some Systems may be able to support more than one reference center. Others may not be able to support even one meeting the above criteria, in which case, they will need to contract with neighboring Systems to share a regional reference center. The System boundaries were not drawn to suit the libraries' reference needs; this design acknowledges that and allows the Systems to redraw reference boundaries accordingly.

4.5.3.3 Tertiary Level

Currently the statewide reference centers authorized in the legislation remain unfunded. The metropolitan reference centers, BARC and SCAN, currently act as the tertiary level of the network, but they are not statewide centers as put forth in the legislation.

One of the problems that we saw with BARC and SCAN acting as the top level of the network is that of divided loyalties. Each is administratively part of the library in which it is housed, but tries to serve that library on a par with all the other libraries that it serves. No formal mechanism exists for the other libraries that use the centers to influence their policies and operations, however, and coordination between the two centers is informal. Finally, BARC and SCAN are demonstration projects sponsored by their host libraries, which are under no obligation to continue them.

For the top level of the network hierarchy, we considered the following alternatives:

1. No statewide center. The Systems would be the final resource for question-answering;

2. One statewide center;

3. Two centers;

4. More than two centers.

The current Systems provide valuable services but answer only 57 percent of the questions referred beyond the local level. The capabilities of the Systems vary, due to System organizations and operations, but also to differences in local resources. To bring all Systems up to the level at which no further resource would be needed would mean considerable duplication and would not be cost-effective. To eliminate the top level of the hierarchy without increasing the capabilities of the intermediate level would reduce the level of service: the 15 percent of the questions referred now answered by BARC and SCAN would be unanswered, reducing to 80 percent the total proportion of questions answered, which is below our performance standard. We therefore eliminated Alternative 1.

Alternative 2 requires that one library be identified as the ultimate question-answerer. Currently no one library is capable of bearing that burden. The State Library (CSL) might appear to be the most logical choice, but its collection was not designed to meet the broad needs of public library users. Its collection has significant strengths, but is not designed to complement public library collections. It is a valuable resource, but it cannot by itself act as the capstone to the network. The major urban public libraries, San Francisco Public Library and Los Angeles Public Library, provide valuable assistance to local libraries through BARC and SCAN, but neither of them is capable of supporting the reference activity of the entire state. Both libraries told us that they are currently hard-pressed simply to find space to house the current reference center staff, and users of the two centers complain that the urban libraries' collections are being decimated by inflation as well as by users. And eliminating either of them as a major reference referral source would mean not using valuable information resources. Alternative 2 is therefore not viable.

Alternative 4 requires that more than two libraries be able to provide statewide back-up reference; but we were unable to identify any public libraries other than San Francisco and Los Angeles with that capability. Although CSL and many non-public libraries, such as university libraries, provide needed support to the public library systems, their collections are not designed to meet public library needs. Their collections complement those of the major public libraries, and should be used, but they are generally not appropriate for the kind of reference work required of a statewide center.

We are left with San Francisco and Los Angeles Public Libraries as the most appropriate sites for statewide reference referral centers. A geographical division of the State between them seems the most appropriate. Other states have followed other designs, such as Pennsylvania where libraries are assigned responsibility for certain Dewey classifications; unless the libraries themselves differ in their capabilities in systematic, identifiable ways, however, such a division would be artificial and counter-productive. A geographic division has the advantages that 1) every library and System knows where its questions are to be referred, and 2) delivery between the statewide centers and the referring libraries is simplified.

The administrative options for these centers include the following:

1. The host libraries administer them under contract to the CLSB.

2. The CLSB administers them, with the directors of the centers reporting to the State Librarian as executive officer for the Board. The CLSB would contract with the housing libraries for space and for the use of their collections.

3. The centers be administered by a new organization representing the Systems and libraries served by each. This organization would apply to the CLSB for funds much as the Systems do and contract with the host library for the center.

The major criterion for choosing among these administrative options is the cost-effectiveness of the service that would result.

Under the first option, the CLSB would in its contract set certain requirements for the centers, which the host library would meet in the most cost-effective fashion. The requirements could specify the organization of the centers (e.g., dedicated staff) or simply the end-products (questions answered within time, which might be accomplished by the library's own reference staff or by dedicated center staff).

Under the second option, the CLSB itself, through the State Library as its administrative arm, would actually operate the centers. This places the control of the centers more directly under the Board than does the first alternative. Because we are recommending that the centers be housed in San Francisco and Los Angeles, they will be geographically remote from the rest of the CSL structure and will not belong to the organization in which they are housed.

The third option would improve the control over the centers of the libraries that use them, but would create a new organization which would require additional effort among the libraries of the State. It would also create a third source of demands on each center: the library in which it is housed; the CLSB which funds it; and the organization that administers it. This would be complicated by the fact that the new organization itself would represent a coalition whose diverse interests would have to be reconciled. The disadvantages of this option outweigh its advantages, leaving the first two.

The first option appears to be the simplest to administer and the most cost-effective. It avoids the conflicts that would inevitably result from having the centers administered from elsewhere. We also think that this alternative would be more acceptable to the host libraries, whose cooperation is necessary if the centers are to be located where we recommend. The contribution of SFPL and LAPL to reference referral in the State through these centers is substantial. Finally, it creates incentives for efficiency. We would suggest that the contract between the CLSB and the host libraries include the following provisions:

1. Reference referral should be the responsibility of a specific unit within the library; it should not be performed by public service reference staff as part of their other responsibilities.

2. Each center should have an advisory panel of librarians from public libraries served by the center.

3. The centers should meet the following performance standards:

    a. Ninety percent of the questions received are answered.

    b. All questions receive a status report within two weeks.

    c. Eighty percent of the questions answered are answered within two weeks.

As with the performance standards recommended in Section 4.4, these should be reviewed after one year, and again after two, to see whether they are reasonable.

4.5.3.4 Conclusions: The Organization-Based Design

In evaluating alternatives for the organization-based design, we concluded that it should consist of the local library as the contact point with the user, an intermediate level which consists of regional (not necessarily System) reference centers, and two statewide centers, at San Francisco and Los Angeles Public Libraries, operated by those libraries under contract to the CLSB.

4.5.3.5 Funding

We noted above that we are assuming that the total expenditures on the reference referral network will remain the same. We have identified several types of allocation mechanisms for an organization-based design, which can be evaluated according to how well they meet the goals of the network (Section 4.3) and the other criteria for aid programs (Section 4.4).

1. Direct support of specified operations. The network plan would specify the organization and staffing of each component. The amount allocated to each component would depend on the cost of supporting the specified organization. This is difficult to administer because it requires that CSL as the administrative arm of the CLSB be involved in the budgeting for each component.

2. Fixed grants per System. Statewide centers to be funded separately.

   a. A fixed amount per System. This formula ignores differences among Systems. The only criteria that it meets are those of simplicity and stability.

   b. A fixed amount per System library. This rectifies some of the inequity of the previous alternative. It would tend to strengthen small libraries, since systems with many small libraries would receive relatively more than those with fewer, larger libraries. It creates disincentives to library consolidation, however, which is encouraged under Section 18732 of the California Services Act.

3. Grants based on the population of each System:

   a. Based simply on total population. Population is often used as a measure of need, but such a formula ignores ability and effort and creates no incentives for increased cooperation except through adding members (and therefore population).

   b. Corrected for population density. This would allocate aid according to population as a measure of need, with a correction for the higher costs of serving geographically isolated areas. It still incorporates no particular incentives for systems to increase their level of cooperative activity and ignores ability and effort.

c. Corrected for local library expenditures. Expenditures represent the local jurisdictions' level of effort in supporting their libraries. Increasing the aid with expenditures provides a local incentive to support libraries. Increasing the aid when expenditures decline compensates for poorly-supported libraries but encourages local jurisdictions to cut their support.

d. Corrected for income or assessed valuation per capita. Both income and assessed valuation represent the local area's ability to support services. Increasing aid to areas with low ability compensates for local limitations, increasing aid to areas of greater need.

In summary, formulas based on population can be corrected for other measures of ability and need. They are generally politically feasible, being used for many other interjurisdictional aid programs. Their major shortcoming is that the System that makes a concerted effort to increase cooperation and improve the level of service in the area receives the same amount as the System that does very little to promote cooperation.

4. Grants based on the level of reference referral activity:

a. Per question answered. This provides an incentive for libraries to engage in reference referral. However, it would be difficult to administer because of the complexity of reference referral. In interlibrary loan, an item is provided, or it is not. In interlibrary reference, it is often difficult to determine when a question has been completely answered. Various components of the network may contribute to answering a single question. And under this formula, the switching and filtering function of the intermediate nodes in the network are not recognized.

b. Per question handled, regardless of whether it is answered. This solves the problem of determining who answered the question. It does mean that a question that pursued a circuitous route through the network would be expensive, but then each library would have incurred costs in working on the question. Any formula based on the number of transactions can be applied to either of two transaction measures:

   a. Net: Only net-answerers would be compensated. This provides disincentives for referral, since a library could stifle its own referrals in order to appear as a net-answerer.

   b. Gross: All questions referred beyond the local level would qualify. This removes the disincentives of the previous option.

5. Discretionary. The individual Systems make specific program proposals to the Board which are then funded or not. The funding agency could use the same criteria that we have proposed above in evaluating requests, and in addition consider the expected effectiveness of each program. Unless the criteria are specified in advance, however, the Board could use any criteria that it chooses, including none at all. Probably the major disadvantage of this method, however, is that for the Board to make informed decisions it must examine each proposal in great detail.

6. The support of the Statewide reference centers could also follow any of options (3) or (4). The population measure, library expenditures, and so forth would be that of the part of the State served.

The Public Library Services Act allocated funds to each System based on population corrected for geographic density as a measure of need; assessed valuation as a measure of ability; and effective tax rate, effort. These funds were for System activities as a whole, including reference.

The California Library Services Act originally allocated reference funds according to the number of libraries in and the population of each System, which are measures of need. Although elsewhere in the Act interlibrary loan and universal borrowing are compensated according to the number of transactions, the library community felt that the difficulty of measuring reference activity made this approach undesirable. Since that first year, reference funds have been allocated by the CLSB annually based on each Systems' previous years' amount and individual budget change proposals. The current system, then, is a modified discretionary formula.

The major problem that we see with the current modified discretionary formula is that it requires a high degree of Board involvement in the Systems' activities without, as far as we can see, significantly improving the Systems' accountability over what it was under a straight formula such as the one in the CLSA. The Board gets involved in decisions such as whether a particular System should acquire an RLIN terminal, because it must approve a Budget Change Proposal for such a change. No direct connection is made, however, between funding requests and the Systems' level or quality of service. And given the number of Systems and their diversity, it is unrealistic to expect the Board to monitor the Systems' individual operations any more closely than it does currently.

Since none of the formulas above meets all our criteria, the best formula is a combination. The most important distinction is between formulas that are relatively stable, such as those based on population, but provide no incentives for change, and those based on transactions, which reward cooperative activity but may be highly variable from year to year. The best formula, by our criteria, would be one that combines elements of these two.

We suggest, therefore, a formula for System coordinated reference based on population, with additional compensation for areas of low geographic density; and on number of interlibrary reference questions handled. We do not include corrections for the wealth of the local jurisdictions or the effective tax rate, for two reasons:

1. Such corrections would complicate the formula, making it more difficult for the Systems to anticipate their levels of funding.

2. Since the aid is going to the Systems, and not the local libraries, one could argue that the wealth and taxing effort of the local jurisdictions is less applicable.

Such refinements of the funding formula would be useful, but are not necessary and would complicate the allocation of funds unduly.

We recommend that the statewide centers be funded under a contract between each of the host libraries and the CLSB.

4.5.4 Formula-Based Design

A formula-based design allocates funds according to some defined criteria. It may then require that the recipients meet certain standards or in some other way justify that they are using the funds to further the goals of the program. The distinguishing feature of a pure formula-based design is that it does not specify how the funds are to be spent, except in the most general programmatic terms. The advantage of a formula-based design is that it allows the recipients to determine the best ways of meeting the program objectives in their areas. The disadvantage is that accountability is more difficult. For example, if a System is using its reference funds to support a reference center under an organization-based design, that is clearly an appropriate use of System funds. If the System is using its funds for less traditional reference programs under a formula-based design, it is more difficult to judge whether they are being used appropriately.

Currently, ILL is funded under CLSA according to a formula. Loaning libraries are compensated at a fixed rate for each request filled. The only requirement is that one party to the transaction be a public library. Libraries of profit-making institutions are not eligible to participate in the program.

This kind of formula-based reimbursement is easier to administer for ILL than for ILR because of some of the differences between the two services:

1. The outcome of each ILL transaction is unambiguous: an item is provided, or it is not. In reference, it is more difficult to determine whether a question was answered, as our evaluation reported in Section 3.5.2.1 showed. And more than one library may contribute to the answer to a question, as it makes its way through the network.

2. Although the costs of making a loan do vary across libraries and within a given library for different kinds of materials, costs are nevertheless more uniform than for reference, which requires large amounts of professional time and in which a search can literally consume several days of staff time.

A formula-based design for reference referral would require:

1. Standards for the libraries that are to participate. These would be derived from our overall network performance standards set forth in Section 4.4. It would not make sense to require that receiving libraries answer successfully a fixed proportion of the questions referred to them, since they would have no control over whether the referred questions were appropriate to their collections; they could, however, be required to answer 90 percent of the questions referred within two weeks.

2. A set of protocols for the sending and the receiving libraries, similar to those for ILL defined by the ALA ILL Code: what information is to be provided by the requesting library, and in what form, and what is the responsibility of the receiving library.

3. A reporting and accounting mechanism.

4. A definition of the process by which it is determined whether a question was answered; alternatively, libraries could be paid for questions worked on, regardless of whether answered.

5. A directory of libraries participating in the program and willing to accept referral questions.

The decisions as to which organizations would be eligible to participate in a formula-based network is a policy decision for the CLSB; we assume that it would be the same as for the ILL network, that is, one party must be a public library and profit-making organizations would be excluded. We would recommend against the latter constraint, however. A number of information brokers are active in California. Their customers, primarily businesses, often prefer to use them even for services such as ILL which are available free from public libraries because the brokers offer higher quality service. If they are willing to provide the same quality of service and at the same cost as the other participants in the network, then they should not be excluded. Of course, they do not use their own collections, but draw on existing library collections; we see that as an issue between the library that is being used and the broker, however. Particularly in reference, where the major contribution of the question-answerer is the staff time, brokers could make accessible libraries that do not choose to participate in the network otherwise.

4.5.5 Evaluation of the Alternative Designs

In order to evaluate the alternative designs, we need to estimate how well they will perform in terms of our evaluation criteria: the network goals set for in Section 4.3; and the other reference network criteria, performance standards, and state aid program criteria of Section 4.4. We cannot predict their performance directly, but we can estimate it relative to the current network. The current network is performing reasonably well on all of these criteria, except that it is not meeting our performance standard for turnaround time of 90 percent of all questions answered within two weeks; the current figure is four weeks. Therefore, we are looking for an alternative that will:

1. Perform at least as well as the current network in terms of proportion of questions answered.

2. Improve turnaround time.

3. Promote the goals of the network at least as well as does the current network.

4. Perform acceptably in terms of our other criteria, as well.

The proposed organization-based design is similar to that of the current network. In choosing the optimal organization-based design, we preferred the proposed one over the current network because we decided that every System should have access to a secondary reference center, which is not currently the case. Questions are answered faster and at much less cost at the secondary level. Systems without centers tend to refer more questions to the tertiary level, increasing cost and time. We also determined that not every System has sufficient demand to support a secondary reference center, so some centers should serve more than one System, which is also different from the current design. Reference centers that are too small tend to offer slower and lower quality service, because they are not taking sufficient advantage of the economies of scale possible in reference service. Having more than one person available to do reference referral, and having those people handle a large volume of complex questions makes the center better able to answer questions. We would therefore expect that the organization-based design would exceed the present network both in turnaround time and in the proportion of questions answered.

The formula-based design is more difficult to evaluate because it is more different than the current network. The major avoidable causes of long turnaround time that we have identified are:

1. Questions are sent to more than one source before they are answered. Currently, the network is averaging 1.4 transactions per question.

2. Questions queue at the referral center. Turnaround time declines considerably during periods of heavy volume.

Under the formula-based design, questions can be sent directly to the most appropriate source, if the referring librarian can identify it. The formula-based design has the potential of either reducing turnaround time considerably by eliminating unnecessary referrals, or increasing it considerably by increasing the ambiguity about where to send a question. It also places a much heavier burden on the referring library, which must decide where to send each question individually, making the network more difficult to use.

We believe that an unstructured referral network would provide a reduced quality of service. Considerable resources would have to be expended on developing, disseminating, and storing information about the appropriate libraries to use for various kinds of questions. To reduce the effort required to make a referral, we expect that librarians will tend to send most questions directly to the major libraries that are the most likely to be able to answer a wide spectrum of questions, violating Goal 3, to make use of all the State's resources, and creating queuing problems at those libraries. As questions are referred to other libraries that are infrequent question-answerers, quality control will become more of a problem, simply because those libraries will be inexperienced with the particular requirements of reference referral. The present network has evolved toward more and more structure, and with reason: librarians have found that the structure is an aid to prompt, accurate service.

We therefore recommend the adoption of the organization-based design as described in Section 4.5.3.

4.6 Reference Support Services

In the formula-based design, there is no provision for reference support services. They would have to be provided and funded separately. Libraries, Systems (which could continue to exist to perform their other functions), or other organizations (such as library schools) could present the CLSB with proposals for training and for other support services, which could then be funded at the discretion of the Board from an amount budgeted for that purpose; or the Board could contract with one or more organizations to provide support services; or the Board could administer support services itself, through the State Library.

Under the organization-based design, the organization could limit its activities to direct reference and any of the above options could be used for indirect reference. However, the reference expertise within the reference referral network is a valuable resource that should be used in any support services.

In the three-level organization-based design, there exist at least three different possible sources of reference support services. We propose that each level should have clearly-defined responsibilities for reference support services. One of the difficulties with the current network is that there is no clear division of responsibility in reference support services. The result is that the libraries are making demands on BARC, for example, for all kinds of training, because BARC is good at training, rather than because it is particularly appropriate for the many kinds of training needs.

Training is of major importance in reference service. The California library profession has discussed the need for continuing education and staff development at great length, but with little effect. The major difficulties seem to be the lack of leadership and of resources. Some individual training efforts have been successful, but they have not been part of an overall plan, nor have they been used for maximum benefit on a statewide level.

In reference training, a coherent plan requires a division of responsibility, including responsibility for overall planning and coordination. Within the network that we have proposed above, the most appropriate division of responsibility is for the local library to take the responsibility for training in the provision of basic services and the interaction between the local library and the network; the secondary or System level is to train in the mechanics of referral and in the use of regional resources. The statewide centers under our design are question-answerers. Although their expertise is of value and should be drawn upon in any training program, we do not recommend that they take a more active role in initiating training. Instead, we see that function as being most effectively handled on the State level by the State Library as the arm of the CLSB.

Only the State Library is in a position to plan and implement a coherent statewide training program that makes the most effective use of all the resources of the State. We place a high priority on a program to identify these resources and develop a training program that combines many training methods, such as workshops and correspondence courses. Reference training should be integrated with other kinds of training, as needed. This would require at least one professional -- with the interest and experience — at the State Library, with appropriate support, whose responsibility would be planning and coordinating training programs, including but not limited to reference.

Another major support activity is the preparation of reference tools. In general, each level should be responsible for the preparation of finding tools and reference aids appropriate to its geographical area, to avoid unnecessary duplication. The major statewide tool is the CLSA statewide bibliographic database, which has considerable promise for reference cooperation, as well as interlibrary loan, but which cannot serve all reference purposes.

One part of reference support services that requires a policy decision from the CLSB, under whatever design is adopted, is the role of State funds for collection development related to coordinated reference. In some Systems, large collection development expenditures can be justified by the lack of reference resources within the System; in other Systems, we question whether the funds are being used for more general collection development. We feel that the $300,000 per year now being spent on materials is excessive, and suggest that this be reduced to $140,000, to be allocated as part of each System's total reference budget using the formula proposed in Section 4.7.3.5. These funds are to be used to support directly reference-related materials. To ensure that they are, a policy on the appropriate uses of these funds should be developed such as the one outlined in Section 3.3.2.

4.7 Service to the Underserved

Under the terms of the CLSA, one or more of the statewide centers was designated as a repository of ethnic materials. The Ethnic Services Task Force has surveyed the availability of ethnic materials in California and concluded that the materials that exist are dispersed, and housed largely in academic institutions, frequently in collections not part of the college or university library system and therefore not readily accessible for interlibrary loan.

In this era of limited budgets and a changing concept of accessibility, the idea of creating anew a comprehensive collection of any sort is archaic. The same resources would be better spent in identifying and providing access to existing materials, wherever they are located. The network should therefore devote its efforts to identifying the existing ethnic collections and making them accessible. Access in this technological age has two components to it: intellectual access, that is, knowing that the materials exist, and where they are; and physical access, delivering the item to the user. Intellectual access can be accomplished through directories and finding lists. The most likely alternative is entering the existing ethnic collections into the statewide computerized database. Some of the collections are uncataloged and would first have to be cataloged. Physical access can be accomplished through negotiations with the owning institutions. The CLSA already provides for compensation for libraries engaged in ILL with public libraries.

The underserved are not only ethnic minorities, and these recommendations are only a beginning to meeting the needs of the underserved. We noted in Section 2.7 that the information services needed by the underserved are more basic than reference referral, and the network cannot back-up local libraries when the local libraries do not provide the underserved with the most minimal level of service. We see the appropriate role of the State in service to the underserved as:

1. Assessing the information needs of the State's underserved.

2. Coordinating the development of and access to collections that meet the needs of the underserved.

3. Supporting the exploration of alternative services and delivery mechanisms for the underserved. The Minority Information Referral Network is an example of the kind of activity that should be supported on the State level.

4. Training local library staff members in skills needed to bring the underserved into the library and to meet their needs once they come.

5. Disseminating the results of some of the excellent programs for service to the underserved already implemented by many libraries and Systems around the State.

This is much more general than coordinated reference, and should not be subsumed under coordinated reference but should be a major program in its own right. We therefore recommend that the CLSB undertake an in-depth assessment of the information needs of the State's underserved and design and implement a program to better meet them.

4.8 Non-Public Libraries

The differences in the levels of involvement in the reference referral network of non-public libraries-- mostly academic libraries on various levels and special libraries, both private and public (e.g., law libraries)-- means that their resources are available to differing degrees, as well. Although the major access to these other libraries' resources has been and will no doubt continue to be through interlibrary loan, these libraries can contribute to reference referral, as well.

The formula-based design would directly compensate non-public libraries for their participation in the network. The extent to which they would be willing to participate would depend on the amount of the reimbursement under the formula.

The alternatives for non-public library participation in the organization-based referral network are:

1. Questions may be sent to the library, to be answered by the library's own staff, on a regular basis. For example, public libraries could be expected to exhaust the resources of their own System area, including non-public libraries, before referring a question to the statewide centers.

2. Questions may be referred for the library's staff to answer but on an occasional basis, when the library's unique resources, such as specialized collections, are needed.

3. Funded staff may be housed in the library. Their responsibility would be to answer questions for other libraries using the host library's collections.

4. Funded staff from elsewhere in the network (such as from System or regional reference centers) may travel to the library to use its resources when needed.

5. The System may contract with the non-public library for services.

All of these organization-based alternatives except (1) currently exist somewhere in the network. Alternative (1) imposes the greatest burden on the non-public libraries, and is least likely to be acceptable to them. Which of the other alternatives, however, is most appropriate depends on each library and on the need. The amount of activity would be a key factor in choosing among (2), (3), and (4). Alternative (2) depends on the willingness of the library to devote staff time to interlibrary reference, (3) on its willingness to house the funded staff. Alternative (4) places most of the burden on the network, rather than the non-public libraries, and is likely to be the alternative that ensures their highest level of participation. We recommend that the reference centers created at the regional and statewide levels under the recommended design be the primary points of contact with non-public libraries. Each reference center should negotiate the means of access (alternatives (1) through (4), above) with the non-public libraries in their area, although we expect that alternative (4) will be the one chosen most often.

Non-public libraries are funded by their parent institutions to provide service to their constituents, not to the community as a whole. The extent to which they are able to make their collections and especially their staff available for interlibrary reference varies considerably. It is not realistic to expect them to engage in question-answering for other libraries on the same scale as the public libraries of the State. At the same time, however, their resources are part of the State's total information resources. Nor is the exchange entirely one-way; especially in more geographically isolated areas, where the libraries of all types tend to be smaller, the resources of the area's libraries can effectively complement one another.

The existing intertype networks and the Systems with non-public affiliates represent an important step in this direction, but the success of these efforts has varied. Furthermore, the impetus for building intertype relationships seems to have weakened, and new networks are not forming.

Every effort should be made to make non-public libraries full partners in interlibrary reference. The extent of involvement and the logistics of cooperation will of necessity be different for each library. However, it should be the policy of the network and the CLSB that every effort be made to increase cooperation between public and other types of libraries. It may be possible to expedite this cooperation by working through existing institutions, e.g., CLASS, and the University of California and California State University and College Systems.

4.9 Libraries Not in Systems

The State's public libraries are not required to join Systems. The five non-System libraries responding to our survey question about their sources of answers to interlibrary reference requests used the California State Library very heavily, and other public libraries. They also reported getting many questions answered by System reference centers. Surprisingly, they reported very little use of BARC and SCAN.

Under the formula-based design, it does not matter whether a library belongs to a System. Under the organization-based design, since we are recommending that the Systems be responsible for the regional level of the network and the funding is based on population in the System area, the non-System public libraries become a problem.

Since the purpose of the CLSA is to encourage cooperation, it would seem appropriate to reward libraries that join Systems. At the same time, the residents of the jurisdictions whose libraries do not belong to Systems do contribute to the Systems' State support. Allowing non-System libraries to go directly to the statewide reference centers would place an unnecessarily great burden on the centers. They would be answering questions for the non-System libraries that the System reference centers filter out. More to the point, we found that it costs more to answer a question at the metropolitan reference centers than the Systems, so our objective is to answer questions before they get to the statewide centers if possible.

What we propose is that the policy be that the route into the State network be through the secondary reference centers. A library that chooses not to join a System will be denied access to other System services and will have no role in governing the System, but it may choose to join the network as a user of the System reference center. The System reference funding formula will include the population of participating non-System libraries. Their questions will be treated equally with those of all other libraries. Public libraries that choose not to participate in the network on this level will have access to the State Library, and will be able to refer questions to other public libraries, as they do now. But they will not have access to the System and statewide centers. The objective of creating a network is to provide service in the most cost-effective manner possible. A library that chooses not to participate in the program should not expect to enjoy the same benefits as those that do.

4.10 Coordination of the Network

In our examination of the current decentralized reference referral network, we found a decision-making void. Within each System, the Administrative Council, consisting of the directors of the member libraries, has administrative responsibility for the System, adopts a plan of service, and submits proposals to the State Board for implementation of CLSA. Most of the Systems employ System coordinators, who implement the Administrative Councils' decisions and administer the System's operations. The intertype networks are each governed by a board representing the member libraries. The only organization with any influence over inter-System activities, however, is the CLSB and the California State Library as its administrative arm.

This void is particularly evident in the relations between the Systems and BARC and SCAN. BARC and SCAN see themselves as serving the needs of the libraries. Although they have general policies concerning the types of questions that are referrable and the procedures to be followed, they have no power to enforce them. They can only persuade the libraries and Systems to follow their guidelines. The libraries and Systems, in turn, have only informal ways of influencing changes in BARC and SCAN.

Montgomery and Dowlin[10] identify the purposes of network governance as:

1. To set the direction for action;
2. To establish basic procedures;
3. To promote stability in the orderly progression toward established goals and objectives;
4. To protect the participants;
5. To establish an operating entity that can be recognized by others;
6. To establish the standard by which library network effectiveness should be measured.

The CLSB performs some of these functions on the most general policy-setting level. It is responsible for the overall direction of the network. However, the Board cannot and should not be expected to involve itself in establishing procedures, negotiating among the interests of the various network participants, and making operational decisions.

The Board does need to take a more active role in setting policy for the network. Currently, the appropriations to the Systems are virtually automatic, with few policies to govern the appropriate use of System reference funds and little program review. The State Library's ability to administer and coordinate the network is limited. The CLSA program office is too small to devote sufficient time to this function.

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[10] K. Leon Montgomery and C. Edwin Dowlin, "The Governance of Library Networks: Purposes and Expectations," In Allen Kent and Thomas Galvin, eds., The Structure and Governance of Library Networks; New York: Marcell Dekker, Inc., 1979.

We therefore recommend that an individual be added to the State Library staff with specific responsibility for reference referral. The individual's responsibilities would include:

1. Performing policy analysis and making recommendations to the Board.
2. Overseeing the data collection on the volume and costs of reference referral activity.
3. Working with the library community to develop procedures for reference referral.
4. Acting as liaison between the Board and the Systems and the libraries with which we are recommending that the Board contract for reference referral services.
5. Monitoring the reference referral program.
6. Coordinating the reference support services other than training, and working with the training person whom we are recommending be responsible for reference and other kinds of training.

We also suggest that the active participation of the Systems be sought in the review, implementation, and administration of the reference referral network proposed in this report. An appropriate vehicle for this involvement might be the Systems Council. We also suggest that the active involvement of the nonpublic libraries of the State be sought. CLASS could be the forum for these discussions.

4.11 Communication and Delivery

The current communication network consists of telephone, mail, System delivery, and TWX. TWX is generally preferred by network participants because it is instantaneous and provides a written copy of the transaction at each end. However, not all libraries have or can justify TWX machines.

The major disadvantage of TWX, besides the fact that not all libraries have a machine, is that it requires complete re-keying of the message for it to be referred further. When the message is rewritten and rekeyed it can be changed; for example, if the local library has sent a lengthy list of sources checked, an intermediate library has to repeat the entire list or risk having the next library re-check some of the same sources. More seriously, in restating the questions the librarian at the intermediate library may change its meaning. Questions that are re-referred several times are particularly vulnerable to misinterpretation.

An emerging information technology offers considerable promise for interlibrary reference. Electronic mail, like TWX, can instantaneously transmit messages from one location to another. The advantage of electronic mail, however, is that the message can remain resident in the host computer system until all parties are finished with it. For example:

> Library A refers a question to System B. The System asks for clarification. After working on the question, the System refers it to statewide center C. With electronic mail, C can look at all the communications between A and B. When the patron asks A the status of his or her request, A can check the online file and see the full correspondence between A, B and C, and tell the user exactly what has happened on the question. C can use the electronic file to keep track of its actions on the question (e.g., letters sent, ILLs requested), which keeps A and B informed, along with C.

The only requirement for participation in an electronic mail network is a suitable terminal. A dial-up terminal such as is used for database searching is ideal. TWX machines can also be used, with a suitable interface. Of course, some libraries will not be able to justify the equipment, just as they cannot now justify a TWX, but at least among the larger libraries, System reference centers, and the statewide centers such a network would be not only feasible but preferable to the current TWX network.

An example of an electronic mail service is currently available in Tymnet's Ontyme-II Electronic Mail Service which is accessible through modified TWX machines. Ontyme is one of several possible systems; we mention it because it is currently being used by libraries in California. Other networks that might be used included the Electronic Information Exchange System (EIES) and The Source. Figure 5 compares TWX and typical electronic mail costs.

Communication is a separate component of CLSA, so its costs do not come out of the reference funds. The use of an electronic mail system may actually reduce communications costs. There should also be a saving in staff time, mainly by avoiding re-keying messages that are re-referred.

The other cooperative activities with major impact on interlibrary reference are interlibrary loan and delivery. The current ILL network is also in need of improvement, but the development of the statewide computerized bibliographic database will help considerably.

In many areas, however, delivery is a considerable barrier to effective interlibrary reference. California is a large state, with vast distances and isolated libraries. The problem of getting needed materials to the user in a timely fashion is considerable.

Evaluating the effectiveness of the delivery system is outside the scope of this study. However, we strongly recommend that a cost-effectiveness study of alternative delivery methods be performed, with the intent of eventually funding a statewide delivery system, as authorized under CLSA. The delivery network is particularly important to the geographically isolated, defined as underserved in CLSA.

Assumptions: 110 baud TWX terminal used - 150 word message typed off-line on tape, sent and received at approximately 100 words per minute, in high density area.

Electronic Mail

1 Message to 1 Library

Computer Connect Charge	$ .12	$ .50
Character Transmission	.06	.06
Message Charge	.15	.15
	$ .33	$ .71

TWX

1 Message to 1 Library

0 - 1000 Mile Range	$ .45 to $ .72
($.30 - $.48/minute)	

1 Message to 10 Libraries

Computer Connect Charge	$ .66	$2.75
Character Transmission	.33	.33
Message Charge	1.50	1.50
	$2.49	$4.58
Cost Per Message	$ .25	$ .46

1 Message to 10 Libraries

0 - 1000 Mile Range	$ .70 to $ .96
($.35 - $.48/minute)	

Data Storage - $ .03/1000 characters/day

RediList Service - $25 per list
Storage Fee - $ 5 per list

Figure 5. Electronic Mail and TWX Cost Comparison

4.12 Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter we developed an organization-based and a formula-based design for the reference referral network, and evaluated them against the present design. We concluded that the most effective design is an organization-based design in which the System reference centers are replaced by regional reference centers and the statewide reference centers authorized under the legislation are created and operated under contract by San Francisco and Los Angeles Public Libraries. This represents an increase in CLSA funding for the reference referral network of $700,000, to fund the statewide centers and to take on the reference support activities currently funded from demonstration funds.

Reference support services are an important function of the referral network, and need more central planning and coordination, which we recommend be the responsibility of the State Library as the operational agent of the CLSB. In addition, we recommend that each component of the network be specifically responsible for the reference support activities within its area.

Reference service to the underserved requires the provision of basic information services to meet these groups' needs. We do not feel that the reference referral network is the appropriate place for these services. Programs should be designed specifically to meet these needs, and not subsumed under coordinated reference.

Non-public libraries remain a major untapped resource within the State. The major advantage of the formula-based design is that it readily integrates non-public libraries that choose to participate; however, we feel that non-public libraries' resources can be better used by regional and statewide reference centers than through a decentralized formula-based design. Involvement of non-public libraries in interlibrary reference is a difficult problem, which we do not feel has been addressed adequately by any of the California Systems, or by other states; our proposal is not the final answer, either, but it is a step in the right direction.

Communications and delivery are funded under another CLSA program. However, reference referral requires that information be communicated and materials delivered. The current communications system is mainly TWX, which is satisfactory, but which can be much improved upon with electronic mail. The delivery system is a major barrier to the timely transmittal of materials sent in answer to a question. The delivery system was outside the scope of this study, but we recommend that it be studied, with a high priority placed on shortening delivery time.

Public libraries that do not belong to Systems are a problem. The State's responsibility to equalize access to information for all of its citizens applies to communities whose libraries do not belong to Systems. However, the local library bears the major responsibility for service to its community, so libraries that choose not to join Systems must not expect to reap all their benefits.

The network suffers from a lack of direction, and a decision-making void. We recommend that the Board take a more active role in setting policy for the network, and that the staff of the CLSA program office be expanded with a reference network specialist to assist the Board and the network components.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

Our major recommendations are:

1. The following performance standards should be adopted:
    a. The network must answer completely and correctly at least 95 percent of all the questions referred.
    b. 90 percent of all questions referred must be answered within two weeks.
    c. At least 80 percent of the questions referred must be answered within the System's geographical area.
2. Our proposed organization-based design should be adopted. This includes:
    a. The funding and implementation of the statewide reference centers authorized by the CLSA. These should be operated by San Francisco and Los Angeles Public Libraries under contract to the CLSB.
    b. The Systems should restructure their reference activity in order to be able to meet the above standards. The primary revision needed in Systems structure is the consolidation of some of the smaller reference centers. The centers to be consolidated will depend on the Systems' ability to meet the performance standards.
    c. Access to non-public libraries is to be primarily the responsibility of the statewide and System reference centers. They are to negotiate arrangements with the libraries in their areas.

   d. Funds should be allocated to the Systems or according to a formula based on population and volume of reference activity. These funds are to be used to support both question-answering and regional reference support activity.

3. A staff person should be added to the CLSA program office within the State Library with responsibility for monitoring and coordinating the performance of the reference referral network and providing information and assistance in the area of reference referral to the CLSB.

4. The CLSB should sponsor a statewide reference training effort. This should begin with the addition of a person within the State Library whose responsibilities are training, including but not necessarily limited to reference training. A plan for statewide reference training should be developed in consultation with knowledgeable individuals within the California library community. The training may be conducted by the State Library as staff to the Board or by other organizations and individuals within the State under contract to the Board.

5. The Board needs to develop policies on the following topics:

   a. The activities appropriately performed under CLSA reference funding.

   b. The materials acquired with CLSA funds.

6. The Board should authorize further investigation of the following areas:

   a. The kinds of assistance needed by local libraries in meeting the information needs of the underserved.

b. The most cost-effective communications and delivery systems for the libraries and Systems of the State.

The implementation schedule outlined in Table 18 is based on the assumption that our recommendations are adopted.

The first task is the review and adoption of the recommendations by the Board itself. The adoption of the performance standards is a major policy decision for the Board. Our standards reflect the present norms of the network. The network currently places a high priority on thoroughness: all questions deserve an answer, every question will be pursued until it is answered. This results in very high quality service, but it is also costly. We feel that one of the strong points in favor of the public library is that it provides highly personalized service and that it does not discriminate among users. By utilizing non-library as well as library sources the network is moving one step closer to the ideal of the library as a source of all kinds of information from all kinds of sources, not just the printed word. But this commitment to quality has its price.

Other areas requiring policy decisions include the definition of appropriate CLSA-funded reference activities and of the kinds of materials to be purchased with CLSA funds. The CLSA defines interlibrary reference as "the providing of information by one library or reference center to another library or reference center as a result of a user request for information" (section 18710(h)). Activities under the reference program, therefore, must directly or indirectly support this function. There are two key elements to this definition: 1) it specifies that one institution is serving another, and serving users only indirectly; therefore, we recommend that services directly to the user be disqualified from this program; 2) the action is a result of a user request for information, that is, a reference question. Activities directed more generally at information-provision-- which, after all, is the goal of all library activity-- do not qualify. Activities that support the interlibrary reference capability, either by improving the quality of interlibrary reference service, or by reducing the need for interlibrary reference, are allowable.

TABLE 18. PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Date	Who	Action
Spring, 1981	CLSB	Review and consider adoption of recommendations Design revised formulas for System reference funding
	CSL	Revise reporting forms
	Systems	Submit budgets for reference service plans based on formula, plus justification for augmentation funds if needed to meet standards
1981-82 First Quarter	Systems	Monitor performance to determine: 1. Whether network performance standards are being met for referral questions originating within System. 2. Whether System performance standards are being met within System.
	CLSB	Submit FY82-3 Budget with increases: $500,000 for statewide reference centers $240,000 for statewide reference training $ 75,000 for additional staffing at CSL $ 75,000 for augmentation fund Reduction of $150,000 from Systems reference (materials)
Second Quarter	Systems	Prepare plans for meeting standards through 1. Consolidation of reference centers 2. Other structural and operational changes
	CLSB	Design revised formulas for System reference funding
Third Quarter	Systems	Submit budgets for reference service plans based on formula, plus justifying augmentation funding if needed to meet standards
Also during 1981-2	CLSB	Conduct assessment of needs of underserved Study communications and delivery Adopt policies on: 1. Appropriate use of reference funds 2. Appropriate use of materials funds Negotiate contracts with SFPL and LAPL (contingent on funding of statewide centers)
1982-3	Systems	Implement revised reference structure per plans and budgets developed in previous year Continue to monitor performance
	CLSB	Review performance standards Implement (if funded) Statewide reference centers Statewide reference training programs Reference network staff person

We suggest that a materials policy be worked out in consultation with reference specialists in the metropolitan reference centers and in the State Library's reference services division. Such a policy might include the following provisions:

1. Appropriate materials would include non-circulation reference materials, including abstracting and indexing services, specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias, handbooks, and other non-circulating materials.

2. Circulating materials would not be excluded, but must be chosen with care. They should normally be non-fiction; be titles not already held within the System; and be entered into the California Statewide Database, in order to make them accessible to their libraries within the System and around the State.

Independently of Board action on our other recommendations, we suggest that the State Library revise the CLSA and other Systems reporting forms in accord with our proposals (Appendix E). We found that the current multiple reporting forms were unnecessarily confusing; that no one individual at the State Library has a complete picture of System activity because the data is collected and analyzed by different offices; and because the data collection categories are not defined nor the information reported reviewed for its reasonableness, the data are unreliable. The adoption of the performance standards that we recommend and the management of the network require reliable data on the volume of activity, turnaround time, and costs of the network, data that is currently lacking, or unreliable.

We found a significant void in decision-making about the network. We are recommending that the Board's staff be expanded to include a reference network specialist, to enable the Board to devote more attention to the network. We also recommend that the Board work closely with the Systems, perhaps through the Systems Council.

For the Systems to determine the actions that they must undertake to meet the standards, they must first know how well they are performing. We therefore recommend that they collect data on performance during the first quarter of 1981-2. Then they should develop plans for improving their performance. We strongly recommend the consolidation of some of the smaller reference centers that do not meet the standards, and the addition of reference centers in the Systems without them.

We are also recommending that the System reference funding be according to a formula based on population and level of reference referral activity. This requires that a formula be developed early in 1981-2 by the CLSB's staff and adopted by the Board, so that in developing their plans the Systems know their level of funding for 1982-3.

The proportion of the total reference funds spent on materials should be reduced considerably: we recommend a 50 percent reduction. State funds should be used to provide more ready access to library resources, and to acquire extraordinary materials, not for basic collection development.

Among the Systems that do not currently meet the performance standards, some will be able to meet the standards within their current levels of expenditure through reorganization and efficiency improvements. For Systems that cannot meet the standards, however, the Board has the choice of withholding their State funds, or supplementing them in order to bring them up to standard. We recommend the second approach, and suggest that the Board set aside an augmentation fund, monies not allocated according to the System reference formula, for this purpose. System not able to meet the performance standards should submit to the Board proposals for a one-time only augmentation to bring them up to par. In time, we would expect the need for the augmentation fund to disappear. If these short-term grants are not sufficient to bring all the Systems up to the standards, the standards and the allocation formula should be reviewed.

The standards should be reviewed annually by the CLSB and the network components. We have proposed these standards based on our best information about the network's current performance and the desires of the State's public libraries. Once the standards are implemented they should be reviewed regularly to determine whether they are workable and are satisfactory to the network users of the State.

The statewide reference centers authorized in the legislation are a key part of the network that is currently missing. The metropolitan reference centers at San Francisco and Los Angeles currently fulfill that role imperfectly. We strongly recommend that the Board request funding for the statewide centers in its 1982-3 budget.

We are also recommending that the current fragmented reference support activity be consolidated under the umbrella of the CLSB. The Systems should continue to perform reference support within their areas, within the funding allocated by the recommended formula. In addition, however, we are recommending that the Board coordinate a statewide training program, with staff at the State Library to assist the Board. The first step in this training program should be a needs assessment and a plan. We would expect that the Board could contract with existing organizations, including libraries and library schools, to conduct the actual training.

Table 18 presents a recommended schedule for implementation, Table 19 shows the budget implications of our proposals over the next five years. Table 19 is predicated on the following assumptions:

1. All costs are presented in 1981 dollars. Increases for inflation have not been included, so that the appropriate inflation rates can be applied when the time comes.

2. We expect an annual increase in reference referral workload of five percent. The funding for question-answering reflects this.

3. We are suggesting that reference support services be held to the current level, pending a more thorough training needs assessment. In the establishment of a network, we would expect high

TABLE 19. PROPOSED CLSA REFERENCE PROGRAM BUDGET, 1981-2 TO 1985-6

1981 DOLLARS

Program	1981-2	1982-3	1983-4	1984-5	1985-6
Systems					
Question-answering	590,000	620,000	650,000	683,000	720,000
Materials	280,000	140,000	140,000	140,000	140,000
Other reference support	455,000	460,000	460,000	460,000	460,000
Subtotal	1,325,000	1,220,000	1,250,000	1,283,000	1,320,000
Statewide reference centers - question-answering*		530,000	545,000	572,000	601,000
Statewide reference program staff		50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Statewide training staff		25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
Statewide training program		240,000	240,000	240,000	240,000
Augmentation fund		75,000	60,000	50,000	40,000
Total	1,325,000	2,140,000	2,170,000	2,220,000	2,276,000

*indicates legislative authorization required costs for training, the development of tools, and the dissemination of information about the network in the early years, with the investment required levelling off as the network becomes operational. Although we are proposing changes in it, the network itself is established and functioning fairly well.

King Research, Inc.
6000 Executive Boulevard, Rockville, Maryland 20852 (301) 881-6766

Dear Public Library Director:

The California State Library has commissioned King Research, Inc. to study the current reference referral system within California. We will be making recommendations concerning its future design and funding to the State Library and the California Library Services Board.

As part of our study, we are asking the public libraries of the state about the libraries' and citizens' needs and desires for reference referral, and your opinions of the current system. That is the purpose of the enclosed questionnaire. We are also asking for some statistical information regarding your reference referral, or interlibrary reference, activities.

It is our desire to develop recommendations that best meet the needs of the libraries of the state. To do that we need your cooperation in telling us what those needs are. It is important, therefore, that every public library in the state participate in this survey. We also strongly encourage you to consult with members of your reference staff when you answer this, because some of the questions ask details about the current referral system that may best be answered by those using it. It is important that we get the best possible information on which to base our recommendations.

Please return the questionnaire to us in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by June 30, 1980. The questionnaire is designed so that the statistical part can be returned separately, if you so desire; you can give the statistical part to the person on your staff best able to provide us with those figures.

At least two meetings of the library community are planned in conjunction with this study. One meeting is in Sacramento on June 18, to discuss the issues that must be addressed in this study and the alternatives to be considered. Another meeting about August 1 in Southern California (date and place to be announced) will review the alternatives that we have designed. We strongly encourage you to attend both meetings, to make your views known. Please contact your State Library consultant for details.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Nancy DeWath

Nancy DeWath, Ph.D.
Senior Research Associate

APPENDIX A

LIBRARY SURVEY

California Reference Referral Survey

INSTRUCTIONS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to ask the public libraries of the state about their reference referral needs and their opinions of the current system. Because of the importance of your answers, we urge you to consult with members of your staff on questions that relate to their areas of responsibility; in particular, you may want to consult with your head of reference services.

Pages 11 through 13 contain statistical questions about your library's use of and contribution to statewide reference referral. These questions have been grouped together so that you can remove or copy those pages to give to the person in your library who can best answer them. If you wish, you can return those pages separately, although we would prefer to get the entire questionnaire back at once. We have enclosed two reply envelopes in case you choose to return the parts separately.

Please return the questionnaire by June 30, 1980 in the enclosed postage-paid envelope(s), or to:

King Research, Inc.
6000 Executive Blvd.
Rockville, Md. 20852

If you have any questions, please ask your state library geographical consultant or call us at (301) 881-6766.

Your answers will be kept confidential.

All numbers are percentages unless otherwise noted.

California Statewide Reference Referral Survey

Library: *Library Survey*
Part 1

(Please make any necessary changes in your mailing label)

Person filling out this questionnaire: ______________________________

Position: ______________________________ Phone: ______________

To which CLSA system does your library belong? ____________________

☐ Does not belong to a system ☐ Is a single-jurisdiction system

Which reference referral center do you use? [*53*] BARC [*47*] SCAN [*0*] Neither

If you also belong to one or more other formal cooperative organizations such as CIN, CIRCULS, SCILL, AWLNET, etc., please list them all: ______________

____

What is the population for your jurisdiction, as reported on your California Public Library Report, 1979? (Check one)

N = 142
%

[*5*] Over 500,000

[*20*] 100,000 to 500,000

[*24*] 50,000 to 100,000

[*22*] 25,000 to 50,000

[*18*] 12,500 to 25,000

[*11*] Under 12,500

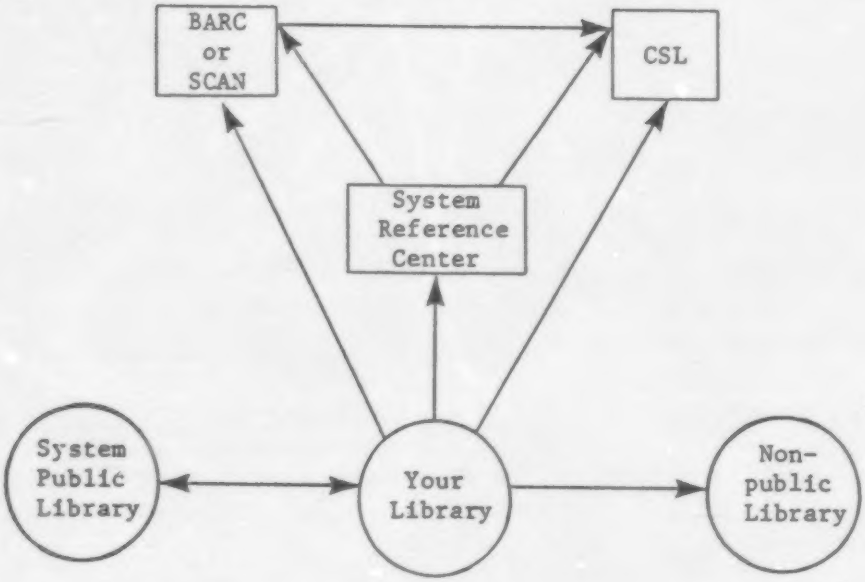
DEFINITIONS

In the questions that follow:

Local system refers to the reference component of your local CLSA public library system, if your library belongs to one. This might include a reference coordinator, area or resource library, and/or the other libraries in your system.

BARC or SCAN refers to whichever of the two your library normally uses.

Reference referral network refers to the entire constellation of reference referral resources available to your library, including your local system, and BARC or SCAN. A typical reference referral network for your library might be drawn this way:



1. Please rank the importance to your library in serving its clients of each of the following possible cooperative activities. *Numbers represent total points assigned in ranking. Highest number means the activity was ranked most important. Lowest number indicates least important activity, etc.*

		RANK THREE ONLY
(1)	Interlibrary loan	372 *points*
(2)	Interlibrary reference, or reference referral	218
(3)	Interlibrary communications and delivery	129
(4)	Statewide computerized bibliographic data base(s)	32
(5)	Cooperative collection development	4
(6)	Staff development and continuing education (e.g., workshops)	10
(7)	Universal borrowing/equal access (i.e., direct service to residents of other jurisdictions)	105

2. In your opinion, for your library and its clientele, which are the most valuable possible services of a reference referral network? *Numbers represent total points assigned in ranking. Highest number indicates the service ranked as most important. Lowest number indicates service considered least important, etc.*

		RANK THREE ONLY
(1)	Developing finding tools (such as directories, union lists of special materials, tools that tell you which library has what)	198 *points*
(2)	Developing reference aids (such as indexes, bibliographies, updates)	95
(3)	Answering reference questions not answered at the local level	368
(4)	Providing bibliographic verification such as for ILL	42
(5)	Providing staff development and continuing education in reference, e.g., workshops	71
(6)	Coordinating the purchase of reference materials	14
(7)	Consulting with local libraries on the management of reference	1
(8)	Consulting with local libraries on building reference collections	13
(9)	Consulting with local libraries on reference search strategy	10
(10)	Acting as a clearinghouse for information about reference work	10
(11)	Acting as a clearinghouse for information on staff development/continuing education in reference	2
(12)	Performing online searches of bibliographic data bases such as DIALOG and Orbit	44

3. Please rank the value to your library of each of the following services as provided by your local CLSA system. *Numbers represent points given in ranking. Highest number is service considered most important, etc.*

   If your library does not belong to a system or is a single jurisdiction system, check here ☐ and go on to question 4.

		RANK THREE ONLY
(1)	Developing finding tools (such as directories, union lists)	*124 points*
(2)	Developing reference aids (such as indexes, bibliographies)	*21*
(3)	Providing staff development and continuing education in reference, e.g., workshops	*48*
(4)	Coordinating the purchase of reference materials	*10*
(5)	Providing funds for the purchase of materials for member libraries	*60*
(6)	Answering reference questions not answered at the local level	*333*
(7)	Providing coordination and communication among reference staffs of the member libraries (e.g., through a reference committee or the actions of a reference coordinator)	*55*
(8)	Acting as reference liaison with BARC or SCAN and other systems	*99*
(9)	Providing online searches of bibliographic data bases	*30*
(10)	Other: ______________________________	*19*

4. Please rank the value to your library of each of the following services as provided by BARC or SCAN. (Rank the top three only. *Numbers represent points given in ranking. Highest number is service considered most important, etc.*

		SCAN	*BARC*
(1)	Developing finding tools (such as directories, union lists)	*43*	*25*
(2)	Developing reference aids (such as bibliographics, updates)	*60*	*42*
(3)	Providing staff development and continuing education in reference, e.g., workshops	*16*	*93*
(4)	Answering reference questions not answered at the local level	*179*	*206*
(5)	Providing information about and/or access to special libraries in the area	*23*	*29*
(6)	Publishing a newsletter	*26*	*33*
(7)	Performing online searches of bibliographic data bases	*25*	*15*
(8)	Other: ______________________________	*4*	*0*

5. Which of the following characteristics of a reference referral network are the most important to you and your staff in meeting your user's needs? *Numbers represent points given in ranking. Highest number of points indicates most important characteristic, etc.*

		Rank
(1)	A high proportion of questions answered	*461 points*
(2)	High-quality answers to those questions that are answered	*443*
(3)	Rapid turnaround time (from first referral to receipt of final answer or materials)	*341*
(4)	A referral network that is easy for the librarians to use	*210*

6. How satisfactory are (1) your local system, (2) BARC or SCAN, and (3) the entire existing reference referral network,* in terms of the following characteristics? *Numbers represent the average of points assigned in rating on a scale of 1 to 5; 1=unsatisfactory and 5=most satisfactory.*

		(1) LOCAL SYSTEM	(2) BARC/SCAN		(3) ENTIRE REFERENCE REFERRAL NETWORK
(1)	The proportion of referred questions that are actually answered.	*4.3 points*	*4.5*	*4.3*	*4.3*
(2)	The quality of the answers received (accuracy, completeness).	*4.3*	*4.0*	*4.4*	*4.3*
(3)	Turnaround time (from referral to receipt of a final answer or materials).	*3.7*	*3.4*	*3.2*	*3.4*
(4)	The ease of use of this source.	*4.5*	*4.3*	*4.0*	*4.2*

If you rated any of the above unsatisfactory, please explain briefly: ____________

---

*Defined on page 2.

7. An ideal reference referral system would be able to answer every question referred to it. Realistically, however, what is the maximum proportion of unanswered questions that you would be willing to accept from a reference network? (Check one only.) N= 146

	%
(1) 0%	1
(2) 1%	10
(3) 5%	40
(4) 10%	32
(5) 15%	8
(6) 20%	5
(7) Other: ____	3

8. An ideal reference referral system would also answer all questions perfectly. Realistically, however, what is the maximum proportion of incorrect or incomplete answers that you would be willing to accept from a reference network? (Check one.) N = 146

	%
(1) 0%	5
(2) 1%	27
(3) 5%	40
(4) 10%	17
(5) 15%	3
(6) 20%	2
(7) Other: ____	5

9. An ideal reference referral system would also feature zero turnaround time, that is, instantaneous answers. Realistically, however, if a reference referral system were to guarantee to answer 90% of your questions without dead lines within a fixed period of time, what would you consider the maximum acceptable turnaround time? (Check one only.) N = 146

	%
(1) 1 day	2
(2) 1 week	15
(3) 2 weeks	51
(4) 1 month	23
(5) 2 months	2
(6) 3 months	1
(7) Other: ____	6

10. Sometimes a question that is not answered at the local level is not referred either. Please rank the three most frequent reasons that a question is not referred from your library. *Numbers represent points given in ranking. The greater the number of points, the more frequently the reason is given.*

		RANK THREE ONLY
(1)	Staff don't think to refer	*49 poin*
(2)	Staff too busy to follow through to find out whether patron has found satisfactory answer within library or needs referral	*108*
(3)	Staff don't think referral network can do any more than they already have toward answering the question	*23*
(4)	Library policy is not to make referrals in certain cases	*6*
(5)	Staff do not encourage referral because they believe question is trivial or patron is not serious	*37*
(6)	Patron not interested in pursuing the request	*308*
(7)	Patron might be interested but unable or unwilling to wait that long for answer	*270*
(8)	Patron does not want question referred because prefers to do his or her own searching	*51*
(9)	Staff unwilling or unable to refer for other reasons. Why? ____________	*4*
(10)	Other: ____________	*6*

11a. Are there particular categories of questions which you find that the existing reference referral network, including your system and BARC or SCAN, does not answer well? *N = 146*

%

(1) Yes *18*

(2) No *78* Go to Question 12.

b. IF YES, please list each and explain briefly the reasons for your dissatisfaction. *There were too few responses to evaluate. No pattern was evident among those given.*

(1) Questions on particular subjects? Which subjects? ____________

____

(2) Other kinds of questions? Describe: ____________

____

Reason for dissatisfaction: ____________

____

12. Briefly, what is your major praise for (use back of page if necessary):
See Attachment A.
(a) Your local system's reference activity?
(b) BARC or SCAN?
(c) The entire reference referral network?

13. And what is your major complaint about (use back of page if necessary):
See Attachment A.
(a) Your local system's reference activity?
(b) BARC or SCAN?
(c) The entire reference referral network?

14. How would you rate the importance of reference referral with non-public libraries in your area? (Check one) *N = 145*

		%
(1)	Cooperation with non-public libraries is currently of great importance to your library	16
(2)	You have arrangements with non-public libraries, and/or use them on occasion, but they are not a major source of reference assistance	42
(3)	Cooperation with non-public libraries could potentially be very useful but currently it is not well-developed	36
(4)	You don't use non-public libraries and don't see any need to	1
(5)	Other:	5

ATTACHMENT A

12. Focus of Major Praise	Local System	BARC/SCAN	Entire Refere Referral Netw
1. Quality of service	36%	26%	41%
2. Number of questions answered	3	2	3
3. Turnaround time	11	4	2
4. Ref. center or system staff	7	3	3
5. Resources: tools, collections, etc.	8	14	12
6. Thoroughness, perserverence	17	26	11
7. Training	1	5	0
8. Cost	1	0	0
9. Hours available	1	1	0
10. Access to computerized data base	1	1	1
11. Ease of use	1	0	1
12. Other	13	18	25

---

13. Focus of Major Complaint	Local System	BARC/SCAN	Entire Refer Referral Net
1. Quality of service	2%	0%	4%
2. Number of questions answered	0	1	0
3. Turnaround time	25	41	32
4. Ref. center or system staff	6	1	1
5. Resources: tools, collections, etc.	7	1	4
6. Thoroughness, perserverence	5	3	0
7. Training	1	1	0
8. Cost	4	1	2
9. Hours available	5	2	2
10. Access to computerized data base	0	2	3
11. Difficulty of use	1	0	2
12. Other	44	47	51

15a. Does your library currently use or have access to (e.g., through another library) a bibliographic utility (e.g., RLIN, OCLC, WLN) to locate items for ILL borrowing? *N = 146*

%

(1) Yes. Our library uses a utility for cataloging and ILL locations 22

(2) Yes. Another library or center uses a utility for us for ILL locations 37

(3) No. Our library uses a utility for cataloging but not for ILL locations 4 Go to Question 16.

(4) No. Another library or center uses a utility for us for cataloging but not for ILL locations 11 Go to Question 16.

(5) No. We have no access to a utility, either direct or indirect. 23 Go to Question 16.

(6) Other 3

b. IF YOU USE A BIBLIOGRAPHIC UTILITY, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, TO LOCATE MATERIALS FOR ILL: What has been its effect on the number of reference questions that you refer? (Choose one.) *N = 146*

%

(1) Because of the bibliographic utility, reference referrals have increased. Why? ______________________________ 8

(2) Because of the bibliographic utility, reference referrals have decreased? Why? ______________________________ 10

(3) Availability of bibliographic utility has not affected reference referrals. 31

(4) Other: ______________________________ 51

16a. Does your library use or have access to online database search services (e.g., DIALOG, Orbit, NY Times Infobank, BRS, Medline) other than through the state library?* (Check as many as apply.) *N = 146*

		%*
(1)	Own library performs database searches	7
(2)	Have access to database searching through SCAN	33
(3)	Have access to database searching through local system or network	43
(4)	Can refer questions (not patrons) to a neighboring library that has database searching	18
(5)	Can refer patrons to a neighboring library that has database searching	25
(6)	None of the above.	21

**Will not total 100% because multiple answers were permitted.*

b. IF YOUR LIBRARY HAS ACCESS TO DATABASE SEARCHING, direct or indirect, has it had any effect on reference materials? *N = 146*

	%
Yes	19
No	55
Other	26

IF YES, please describe briefly: ____________________

Thank you for answering these questions. We would be interested in any other comments that you may have on reference referral, especially concerning characteristics that you would like to see added to or retained in the reference referral network as a whole. Please use space below and on reverse. Attach a separate page if necessary.

---

*CSL may choose to perform a database search on behalf of another library in response to a subject request.

Library Survey
Part 2

STATISTICAL DATA

The following questions ask for statistical data concerning your library and its use of and contribution to the statewide reference referral network. We have grouped these questions together so that you can copy or remove these pages and give them to the person in your library best able to report these figures. Although we would prefer to get both sections of the questionnaire at once, you may return this portion separately. We have enclosed two reply envelopes for this purpose, or you can mail these pages directly to us at:

King Research, Inc.
6000 Executive Blvd.
Rockville, Md. 20852

If you have any questions, please call your state library geographical consultant or King Research at 301-881-6766.

In answering the following questions, you will want to refer to:

1. Your California Public Library Report, 1979
2. Your own statistics of interlibrary reference, if you have them, including any statistics that you report to your system on system reference and those that will go into your California Public Library Report, 1980.
3. Logs of reference questions referred between your library and your system, network, statewide resource, or other libraries, if you have them.

Where we ask for statistics that are not reported on your California Public Library Report, please use the best statistics that you have available. If you do not have figures, please give us your careful, thoughtful estimate. When in doubt, please count each patron request as one question, regardless of the number of times that it is referred to different sources before it is completed.

(Is your mailing label correct?______)

Name of person filling out this part of questionnaire: ____________________

Title: ______________________________ Phone: ______________

A.	How many questions did your library answer on referral from other libraries in 1978-9? Please enter figure from line 15 of your California Public Library Report, 1979.	49,366 Total 475 Average (104) # of Respons
B.	How many questions has your library answered on referral from other libraries 1979-80 estimate?	30,608 Total 373 Average (82) # of Respons
C.	How many questions did your library refer to outside sources, including your system, network, and statewide resource center (BARC or SCAN) in 1978-9? Please enter figure from line 14 of your California Public Library Report, 1979.	28,798 Total 242 Average (119) # of Respons
D.	How many questions have you referred 1979-80 estimate?	42,177 Total 398 Average (106) # of Respons
E.	How many questions were answered for your library by others in response to referral in 1978-9? Line 17 of your California Public Library Report, 1979.	33,024 Total 290 Average (114) # of Respons
F.	How many questions have been answered for you 1979-80 estimate?	16,156 Total 162 Average (100) # of Respons

TABLE A-1. SOURCES OF ANSWERS TO REFERRED QUESTIONS, IN PERCENTAGES

(no. of responses)

	Cooperative Systems														Single-Jurisdiction Systems						
Source of Answer	BALIS (7)	Black Gold (5)	49-99 (5)	Inland (8)	Metropolitan (19)	MOBAC (6)	Mt. Valley (12)	North Bay (9)	North State (9)	Peninsula (7)	San Joaquin (5)	Santiago (7)	Serra (11)	South Bay (4)	South State (1)	Long Beach (1)	LA Co. (1)	SF PL (1)	Non-System (5)	ALL (123)	Cumulative (%)
System reference center	15%	90%	66%	68%	70%	51%	73%	31%	55%	31%	60%	70%	78%	60%	NA	NA	NA	NA	27%	57%	57
Other public libraries in your system	33	1	3	2	11	12	2	17	3	28	15	14	3	17	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	10	67
SUBTOTAL- Own system	48	91	69	70	81	63	75	48	58	59	75	84	81	77						67	67
BARC or SCAN	25	2	13	19	9	10	8	35	20	13	3	10	4	4	65	93	100	100	3	15	82
California State Library	1	1	11	2	1	5	4	3	4	4	6	2	2	1	2	2	0	0	24	4	86
Other public libraries, not in your system	2	1	2	3	1	7	1	9	1	7	2	2	1	4	5	0	0	0	22	3	89
Non-public libraries	2	3	2	5	1	9	2	2	5	8	7	1	7	5	2	0	0	0	5	4	93
Other sources	4	1	0	6	5	5	1	1	8	3	3	0	1	9	1	0	0	0	12	2	95
No answer found	12	3	4	4	3	2	9	3	6	4	4	1	6	0	25	5	0	0	7	5	100

Columns may not add to 100% because of discrepancies in library reports and because of rounding.

TABLE A-2. PERCENT OF REFERRED QUESTIONS RESOLVED WITHIN GIVEN TIME

(no. of responses)

Time Required	BALIS (6)	Black Gold (5)	49-99 (5)	In-land (7)	Metro-poli-tan (16)	MOBAC (4)	Mt. Valley (11)	North Bay (9)	North State (8)	Penin-sula (7)	San Joa-quin (5)	San-ti-ago (7)	Serra (9)	South Bay (4)	South State (11)	Long Beach (1)	LA Co. (1)	SF PL (1)	Non-Sys-tem (3)	ALL (108)	Cumu-la-tive (%)
Within 24 hours	21%	1%	5%	2%	8%	13%	2%	4%	4%	12%	9%	8%	3%	18%	3%	5%	NA	NA	7%	6%	6%
Over 24 hours, but no more than 2 (calendar, not working) days	14	5	10	8	5	11	2	3	1	14	3	3	3	8	4	0	NA	NA	1	6	12
3 days	5	1	2	2	7	10	2	2	2	6	24	2	6	6	6	0	NA	NA	0	5	17
4 days	1	1	1	1	3	0	3	2	1	3	16	3	3	5	6	0	NA	NA	0	3	20
5 days	1	13	4	8	9	6	1	4	14	1	4	15	3	5	6	0	NA	NA	0	6	26
6 days	2	1	1	2	2	0	3	3	2	1	6	4	12	6	6	0	NA	NA	0	3	29
7 days	15	4	4	8	18	31	5	12	9	10	15	14	19	23	6	20	NA	NA	0	13	42
8-14 days	23	12	40	25	21	10	20	22	29	22	7	36	19	16	21	0	NA	NA	17	22	64
15-21 days	6	24	14	14	12*	7	25	14	13	17	4	9*	8	2	21	60	NA	NA	43	14	78
22 days to 1 month	1	19	5	13	9	8*	11	13	7	9*	7*	3	15*	1*	21*	5*	NA	NA	27	10	88
1 to 2 months	1*	15*	8*	12	4	1	14	10	10*	3	2	1	5	5	0	10	NA	NA	4	7	95
2-3 months	0	2	2	2	4	3	5*	3*	2	1	1	1	4	1	0	0	NA	NA	4	2	
3 months or more	0	.2	3.2	2	.3	.3	4.5	3.1	.4	.1	1.4	0	.1	3.1	0	0	NA	NA	1	1	98
Cannot determine or other problem	12	1	1	2	1	0	2	6	7	2	0	2	1	2	0	0	NA	NA		2	100

*90% of all questions answered within this period.
May not add to 100% because of discrepancies in library reports and because of rounding.

APPENDIX B

SYSTEM SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

King Research, Inc.

6000 Executive Boulevard, Rockville, Maryland 20852 (301) 881-6766

Dear System Coordinator or Chairperson:

The California State Library has commissioned King Research, Inc. to study the state's reference referral network and to make recommendations about its design and funding to the California Library Services Board. As part of this study, we are doing two surveys, one of all the public libraries of the state, and one of all the systems.

The purpose of the public library survey is to ask library directors about their libraries' needs for reference referral and their evaluation of the current system. The purpose of the system survey is to collect descriptive information about the systems' reference activity. The following rather lengthy list of questions is the system survey. Please answer the questions however you prefer. You may send us copies of relevant documents, or cut and paste from reports that you have written, or just sit down and write us a long letter. We would like to talk with each and every one of you, but time does not permit. So although we may call you with questions or for clarification, you have to assume that what we learn about your system will come from what you tell us in response to this survey. Please answer every question thoroughly. And if we don't ask something that you think we should know, please tell us about it anyway.

Also enclosed for your information only is a copy of the questionnaire that has gone to every public library in the state. We would appreciate your help in encouraging the libraries in your system to return them to us as soon as possible. Please do not answer the library questionnaire; it is for your information only.

At least two meetings of the library community have been scheduled to discuss possible alternative reference referral network designs that we might consider, and to discuss the alternatives that we develop. These will be June 18 in Sacramento and about August 1 in Southern California. Please contact the California State Library for details.

Please send us your response to this questionnaire by June 30, 1980. If you have any questions, call your State Library geographical consultant or call us at King Research.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours truly,

Nancy DeWath

Nancy DeWath, Ph.D.
Senior Research Associate

California Statewide Reference Referral Study
System Survey

(Please make any necessary corrections on your mailing label)

Name of person answering this questionnaire: ______________________________

Title: ____ Phone: ______________

Number of public library system members: ______________

Number of non-public affiliated libraries: ______________

Approximate population in your service area: ______________

PLEASE RETURN THIS PAGE WITH YOUR RESPONSE.

1. Please list the major activities of your system, and the approximate percentage of system effort devoted to each. The percentages may be derived from your system budget, if you think that is a fair representation.

2. Please list your system's reference activities (e.g., answering reference questions; publishing a newsletter; training). What is the approximate proportion of system resources (not member libraries' resources) devoted to each? You may want to express this in terms of proportions of system staff time, and proportions of other expenditures.

3. What do your member libraries contribute to system reference activities? (E.g., do they answer reference questions for one another, contribute to system workshops?)

4. Please draw a diagram of your system's reference referral network, showing which nodes (libraries, reference centers) refer to which. Where does BARC or SCAN fit? Non-public libraries?

5. We have your CLSA expenditure reports and budget requests. Do you have any supplementary statistics on the volume of interlibrary reference activity a) by your system reference center(s) and/or system reference staff? b) by member libraries for other system member libraries?

   If so, please provide.

6. How do your member libraries decide where to send a question?

7. Which of these characteristics do you think is most important in a reference referral network? Please rank them from 1 (most important) to 4 (least). We know that they are all very important; but which are most important? Why did you make the choices that you did?

   a. ☐ A high proportion of questions answered

   b. ☐ High quality answers to those questions that are answered

   c. ☐ Rapid turnaround time

   d. ☐ A referral network that is easy to use

8. What are the major problems of the existing referral network, as it relates to each of a through d above? Differentiate between your system and other parts of the network, if you think that is necessary.

9. What percentage of the questions referred to the system are unanswered? (Do you have statistics?)

10. What are the main reasons why questions are not answered?

11. What are the reasons why questions not answered at the local library are not always referred? List them and give some indication of their relative frequency.

IF YOU HAVE A REFERENCE CENTER OR COORDINATOR WITHIN A MEMBER LIBRARY:

12. Administratively, how does this work?

    13. Do the staff of that library ever refer questions to the system staff? If not, why not? If yes, what kinds of questions?

    14. Do the housing library's staff ever assist the system staff? Vice versa?

    15. Does having system staff at that library create any problems with other libraries in the system?

16. What changes would you like to be able to make in your system reference activity?

17. Has your system performed any self-evaluation? (E.g., surveys of users, studies of turnaround time.) If so, we would appreciate any documentation that you may have. Did you take any actions based on these evaluations?

18. Is the reference referral network used for information and referral questions? (I&R: facilitating the link between a client and some outside, non-library resource.)

19. Has Prop 13 changed the demands made on the system? If so, how?

20. How valuable is BARC or SCAN (whichever you use) to your system in getting answers to reference questions? How valuable are the other activities of BARC or SCAN?

21. What could improve the service that BARC or SCAN provides?

22. What are the relations between your system and the non-public libraries in your area?

23. What, in your opinion, are the major strengths of the entire reference referral network, including the systems and BARC and SCAN? The major weaknesses?

24. In your system, are there special efforts to serve disadvantaged clients? If so, describe briefly.

Thank you. Please feel free to add any other comments.

APPENDIX C

SYSTEM AND CENTER INTERVIEWS

System Interview Schedule

What are the major activities of the system?

What are the major reference activities of the system?

How do referrals travel through the system?
(Statistics?)

Have the demands made on the system changed over the years?

Did the demands made on the system change after Proposition 13?
How? Are you still seeing the effects of Proposition 13?

Which of these characteristics of a reference referral network is the most important to you? Why?

a. A high proportion of questions answered.
b. High quality answers to those questions that are answered.
c. Rapid turnaround time.
d. A referral network that is easy for librarians to use.

How well does your system perform in each of these areas? BARC/SCAN?

What are the reasons why questions not answered at the local library are not referred?

What are the relations between the system reference coordinator or reference librarians and the library(s) that house them?

What changes would you like to see in your system's reference activities? In BARC/SCAN?

Are there particular kinds of questions that the current reference referral system doesn't answer well - questions that fall between the cracks, or just aren't well-suited to reference referral?

What are the relations of your system libraries with non-public libraries in the area?

What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the current reference referral system?

PERSONS INTERVIEWED IN SYSTEM AND CENTER VISITS

BARC

Glenda Hooper, BARC Director
Ann Roughton, Assistant Director, BARC
Elizabeth Storey, Workshop Coordinator, BARC
Carol Coon, Reference Librarian, BARC
Sandra Drisson, Reference Librarian, BARC
John Frantz, City Librarian, San Francisco Public Library
Ann Kincaid, Head of Adult Services, SFPL
Mary Ashe, Head, Art and Music Department, SFPL
Patricia Hall, Reference Librarian, Art and Music Dept., SFPL
Marian O'Donnell, Head, Science, Technology, and Documents, SFPL
Lee Smith, Reference Librarian, Science, Technology, and Documents, SFPL

NORTH STATE

Jim Kirks, System Coordinator
Josephine Terry, County Librarian, Butte County Library
Alice Seely, Asst. County Librarian, Butte County Library
Cathie Helmick, Reference Librarian, Butte County Library
James Allensworth, Reference Librarian, Butte Information Center
Grace Gilman, County Librarian, Shasta County Library
Janet Albright, Reference Librarian, Shasta Information Center
Judy Klaproth, County Librarian, Eureka-Humboldt Library
Lisa Naef, Assistant County Librarian, Eureka-Humboldt Library
Marilyn Murphy, Reference Librarian, Eureka Information Center
Dee Sockbeson, Head of Reference, Eureka-Humboldt Library

PENINSULA

Jane Light, System Coordinator
Sam Chandler, Director, Daly City Public Library; System Chairperson
Joan Larsen, Reference Coordinator
Jean Davis, County Librarian, San Mateo County Library
Ann Scott, Head of Reference, San Mateo County Library
Warren Netz, Branch Librarian, San Mateo County Library
Kay Judge, Reference Librarian, San Mateo County Library
Beth Svee, City Librarian, San Bruno Public Library
Ann Ramburg, Head of Reference, San Bruno Public Library
Karl Vollmayer, City Librarian, Redwood City Public Library
Ned Himmel, Head of Reference, Redwood City Public Library

SCAN

Evelyn Greenwald, SCAN Director
Lily Shintani, Science Subject Specialist, SCAN
Gordon Brooks, Social Sciences Subject Specialist, SCAN
Dianne Maccary, History Subject Specialist, SCAN
Sally Dumaux, Resource Specialist, SCAN
Marilyn Tamura, Director of Branches, Los Angeles Public Library
Loyce Pleasants, Director of Central Library, LAPL
Kathryn Carr, Regional Librarian, West LA, LAPL
Eleanore Schmidt, Reference Librarian, West Valley Regional Branch, LAPL
Betty Gay, Asst. Director of Central Library, LAPL
Pat Zeidler, Reference Librarian, Science Dept. LAPL
Joan Bartel, Dept. Head, Business and Economics, LAPL
Judy Ostrander, Reference Librarian, Business and Economics, LAPL

Serra

Debra Miller, System Coordinator
Margo Sasse, Reference Coordinator
Ellen Sneberger, Reference Librarian, Serra
Graham Humphrey, Director, Escondido PL; System Chairperson
Katherine Lukas, Director, San Diego County Library
Neal Clifford, Reference Librarian, San Diego County Library
Bea Powers, Head of Reference, San Diego County Library
Fred Schecter, Director of Central Library, San Diego Public Library
Margaret Queen, Division Head, San Diego Public Library
Jan Rollins, Director, Brawley Public Library
Pauline Goddard, Head of Reference, Brawley Public Library
Shula Monroe, Director, National City Public Library
Ann Hartman, Public Services Director, National City Public Library
Teresa Russell, Head of Reference, National City Public Library

APPENDIX D

REFERENCE QUESTION EVALUATION

REFERENCE EVALUATION

The reference question evaluation was performed on a sample of 50 reference questions from each of the five library systems, except Peninsula, from which only 36 usable requests were received. Some questions from each set were eliminated from the judging. They were either obviously complete and correct (e.g., questions requesting books by a given author, with a response indicating that such was sent), or were not verifiable (e.g., not enough information contained on the forms, or the request and/or reply was not legible). The first 20 of the remaining evaluatable questions were sent to judges who were experienced reference librarians, chosen for their reference skills. Each question was judged three times. The evaluators were sent copies of the documentation on each request - the TWXed or mailed request, reply, and other correspondence - and asked to evaluate each answer. Because we needed written records of the transaction for the evaluation, our sample does not represent questions handled entirely by phone; for example, BARC has a toll-free number that libraries can call to see if BARC already has the answer on file (for instance, to a frequent question on a popular topic). Since the Systems and centers that we evaluated all normally conduct reference referral in writing, however, our sample was generally representative of the kinds of request received.

King Research, Inc.
6000 Executive Boulevard, Rockville, Maryland 20852 (301) 881-6766

April 8, 1980

Dear

King Research, Inc., is engaged in a study of interlibrary reference referral for the California State Library. As part of this study, we will be evaluating the correctness of the answers given to reference questions that have been referred. The evaluation method that we have decided to use is to ask a judge to look at the question and the answer that has been provided (usually with the source of the answer included), to verify the answer, and to evaluate it on a scale from full and correct to not correct.

Your name has been suggested as someone who might a) serve as a judge, b) be able to put us in contact with potential judges, or c) both. Judges should have ready access to a comprehensive reference collection such as would be found in a large public library, and should be generally recognized as good reference librarians. We will pay them for their efforts.

I will be phoning you during the week of April 14 to discuss this with you. At that time I will explain this project in more detail, and would appreciate any names of potential judges that you could suggest.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours truly,

Nancy DeWath

Nancy DeWath, Ph.D.
Senior Research Associate

ND:sab

Center for Quantitative Sciences

TO: California Reference Referral Judges　　DATE: June 24, 1980

FROM: Nancy DeWath

RE: Instructions for Judging

RESPONSES DUE: July 18, 1980

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine how accurately questions that have been referred from one library to another within the California public library reference referral network have been answered.

You have received a sample of transactions with the written information available on each question. The question is stated in a teletype message from one library to another, or on a worksheet, mailed from one library to another, or filled out by the receiving library as the question comes by telephone.

Usually the question as asked includes:

- The referring library, and librarian;
- A deadline date, where such exists (sometimes labelled "TMB");
- The purpose of the request;
- Sources checked at the referring library;
- Suggested sources to try;
- Other comments.

The information that you have received may include the receiving librarian's worksheets, with information such as sources checked during the search. There may also be additional messages, clarifying the request or giving status reports. The question may have been referred on to a third library, or the receiving library may have checked non-library sources by telephone or mail, and you may have copies of these communications.

Finally, an answer was or was not found and a report sent to the originating library (all questions in this sample are completed, i.e., the libraries have finished working on them). The answer to the question may be in the report, or the answer may be contained in materials or copywork ("DAP") listed in the report and sent separately. Occasionally you will have a copy of what has been sent.

We would like you to as far as possible verify and evaluate the answer that has been given. You do not need to evaluate the search strategy followed, or the form in which the question was asked or the reply sent. You are to concentrate on whether the question was indeed answered. To do this, you should whenever possible check the answer against the sources cited or other sources in your library. Occasionally you will be able to evaluate the answer simply by inspecting the report (e.g., the question is for words and music to a song, and the report is that copywork of sheet music is being sent). On some questions you will probably be unable to evaluate the answer because you do not have access to the materials sent in reply (e.g., a personal letter from an expert in the field).

You have received an evaluation form to record your ratings. Please use our categories, so that the evaluations will be comparable across judges. However, we encourage you to use the comments section to explain and expand upon your ratings.

Once you have finished your evaluation, please return your evaluation forms to us (you need not return the questions). We will process your check as soon as we receive your evaluations. We would also be interested in any general comments that you may have on the questions that you have seen, on the California reference referral system as you have seen it at work in these questions, or on this method of evaluating reference. Please feel free to write or call me.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call. Also, if you find yourself unable to participate, please let me know immediately so that we can replace you.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

CALIFORNIA REFERENCE EVALUATION FORM

ACTIONS TAKEN (CHECK ONE):

(1) ____ Verified source(s) cited

(2) ____ Verified answer in another source

(3) ____ Could not/did not verify answer. Why not? (If because no answer possible, go to 5a.) ____________________

RATING OF ANSWER:

(1) ____ Complete and correct

(2) ____ Mostly correct, but

  (a) ____ partially incorrect

  (b) ____ incomplete

(3) ____ Partially correct, but

  (a) ____ mostly incorrect

  (b) ____ mostly incomplete

(4) ____ Incorrect answer given. Explain briefly; include correct answer if possible: ____________________

(5) ____ No answer given:

  (a) ____ No answer possible. Explain: ____________________

  (b) ____ Answer possible. Did you find an answer?
  ____ Yes ____ No
  Explain: ____________________

(6) ____ Cannot evaluate answer. Please give reason:

  (a) ____ Answer not verifiable.

  (b) ____ Question not clear in documentation I received.

  (c) ____ Answer not clear from the documentation I received.

  (d) ____ Other: ____________________

OTHER COMMENTS:

USE REVERSE AS NECESSARY.

REFERENCE QUESTION EVALUATION JUDGES

Betsy Bentley
New York Public Library
Cooperative Services

Carolyn Davis
Business and Technology Division
Dallas Public Library

Ben LoBue
University Libraries
University of Colorado

Evelyn Greenberg
Head of Public Services
Alexander Library
Rutgers University

Gerry Hurley
WILS Reference Librarian
Wisconsin Interlibrary Loan Service

Jeanine Thubauville
Memorial Library
Reference Department

Lillian Zwyns
New York Public Library
Cooperative Services

Elaine Jennerich
Moody Memorial Library
Baylor University

Carolyn Dusenbury
316 Marriott Library
University of Utah

Margaret Nichols
Ass't. Professor
North Texas State University

Virginia Phillips
Pery Castaneda Library
University of Texas at Austin

Elmer Ponack
University Libraries
University of Colorado

Rochelle Yates
Division Chief
Telephone Reference
Brooklyn Public Library

EXAMPLES OF JUDGED REFERENCE QUESTIONS

1. Address of agent for Orson Wells.

2. Latest figures for amount spent on interest for the national debt.

3. Origin of the phrase "Sound as a dollar."

4. Simple linear drawing of both internal and external organs of a human having both male and female reproductive organs. To be used in conjunction with a science fiction story patron is writing.

5. As many reproductions of Peter Max's art work as possible, preferably in color.

6. Patron has a carob tree in her yard and would like to know how to process the carob - what parts of the pod to use, how to grind it, etc.

7. Is there a correlation between violence (crime, abusiveness, or rage) and epilepsy or aggression and epilepsy?

8. Patron would like information on how to start a local television station.

9. Words and music to a song titled "I Found a Lemon in the Garden of Love Where They Say Only Peaches Grow."

10. Patron wants to know about the custom of burning shoes on New Years Day. Why is it done and is the custom associated with any ethnic group?

11. Detailed information on Zulu war dances.

12. Repair information on an Allis-Chalmers tractor (Caterpillar) dated around 1957.

13. Recent research and treatment of disease bullous pemphigoid.

14. Patron needs an arithmetic or beginning mathematics book in Spanish.

15. Sales statistics for 1967-1977 for college yearbook industry - specifically total sales volume within U.S.

16. Patron wants to read all books in fiction by Richard Alexander Hough, an English author born in 1922.

17. Mailing address of the Spanish government's patent office.

18. Patron is interested in current Haitian situation within the last three years. I. Culture II. Political III. Religion and voodoo

19. Any information on a bird that pet shops call a NANDAY.

20. Vitamin breakdown in wheat germ, particularly all B vitamins.

TABLE D-1. REFERENCE QUESTION EVALUATION: DETAILED FINDINGS

From each sample of 50 questions per System or Center (except from Peninsula, from which we received 36), we first chose 20 questions to be judged by experts. We eliminated from the judging three groups of questions:

1. Those for which the appropriateness of the answers could be readily evaluated, without recourse to outside judges; for example, where the request was for several books by a given author, and the reply was that several such books were being sent. These were evaluated by King Research, but not judged by experts (in Table D-1, the second line within each System).

2. Those which could not be evaluated, usually because the correspondence was incomplete or was illegible after photocopying. (In Table D-1, column 7.)

3. Those which could have been judged, but were in excess of the 20 questions needed from each center or System. These were not evaluated and not judged. (In Table D-1, column 8.)

Table D-1 reads as follows:

Within each System or center, reading down, the first line reports the findings for the 20 questions sent to judges. The second line adds in the findings for each question that could be evaluated without an outside judge. The third line totals the first two. The fourth line reports that total as a percentage of all the questions in the sample; the fifth line presents the total of line three as a percentage of the questions, judged and not judged, which were evaluated.

The columns present the results of the judging. Columns (1) through (5) present the results of the evaluation. The questions evaluated by KRI were only ones that could be rated "Complete and Correct" without being sent to judges. Column (6) totals columns (1) through (5), the questions evaluated by judges or at KRI. Column 7 reports the questions that could not be evaluated (2, above), and column 8 those that were not sent to judges because they were in excess of the 20 needed. Column (9) is the total for all columns.

TABLE D-1. REFERENCE QUESTION EVALUATION: DETAILED FINDINGS

		Evaluated Questions						Not Evaluated		
System or Center		(1) Complete and Correct	(2) Mostly Correct	(3) Partially Correct	(4) Incorrect	(5) No Answer	(6) Total Evaluated[1]	(7) Could Not Evaluate	(8) Not Judged	(9) Total[2]
BARC	Judged	15	2	0	1	1	19	1	N/A	20
	Not judged	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	8	21	30
	Total	16	2	0	1	1	20	9	21	50
	% of total	32%	4%	0%	2%	2%	40%	18%	42%	100%
	% of questions evaluated	80%	10%	0%	5%	5%	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A
SCAN	Judged	10	8	0	1	1	20	0	N/A	20
	Not judged	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	4	25	30
	Total	11	8	0	1	1	21	4	25	50
	% of total	22%	16%	0	2%	2%	42%	8%	50%	100%
	% of questions evaluated	52%	38%	0	5%	5%	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A
North State	Judged	14	4	0	1	0	19	1	N/A	20
	Not judged	11	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11	17	2	30
	Total	25	4	0	1	0	30	18	2	50
	% of total	50%	8%	0%	2%	0%	60%	36%	4%	100%
	% of questions evaluated	83%	13%	0%	3%	0%	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Peninsula	Judged	15	3	0	0	0	18	2	N/A	20
	Not judged	6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	6	4	16
	Total	21	3	0	0	0	24	8	4	36
	% of total	58%	8%	0%	0%	0%	67%	22%	50%	100%
	% of questions evaluated	80%	13%	0%	0%	0%	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Serra	Judged	13	2	1	0	3	19	1	9	20
	Not judged	17	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	17	4	9	30
	Total	30	2	1	0	3	36	5	9	50
	% of total	60%	4%	2%	0%	6%	72%	10%	18%	100%
	% of questions evaluated	83%	5%	3%	0%	8%	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A
ALL	Total	103	19	1	3	5	131	44	61	236
	% of total	44%	8%	< 1%	1%	2%	55%	19%	26%	100%
	% of questions evaluated	79%	15%	< 1%	2%	4%	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A

[1] (6) = (1)+(2)+(3)+(4)+(5)

[2] (9) = (6)+(7)+(8)

APPENDIX E

SUGGESTED STATISTICAL REPORT REVISIONS

The goal of statewide reporting is to produce total counts of a wide range of activities, services, and resources. The choice of the data to be collected depends on the uses to which the information is to be put. Once the data are collected, they must be compiled and analyzed in some meaningful way, or else they are simply an added burden on the library and System staff. Finally, such figures are meaningless without sufficient quality control to insure their accuracy. In statistical reporting, clear definitions and specific directions are required. Even when every effort is made to create self-explanatory report forms, it must not be assumed that terms mean the same thing to everyone or that measuring procedures are merely common sense. Written definitions and detailed instructions must accompany all forms if the data are expected to be consistent.

Financial Reporting

California Systems expenditure data are presently reported on two forms which go to two offices within the California State Library. The System Program Expenditure Report gives an accounting only of CLSA funds and goes to CLSA Program Office. The California Library System Report describes total System income and expenditure and goes to the Library Development Services.

The use of two forms permits apparent inconsistencies in reporting to go unnoticed or unchallenged. For example, several Systems reported more CLSA funds spent for reference (System Program Expenditure Report) than total reference expenditures (California Library System Report). Multiple reports also place an unnecessary burden on the System staff and fiscal agents. One master report form should be developed which would incorporate all data presently reported on these two forms. Such a format would minimize the possibility of contradictory data and an accurate total picture of each System's finances.

A summary expenditure matrix might be designed as follows:

PROGRAM	SALARIES	LIBRARY MATERIALS	OPERATING EXPENSES	EQUIPMENT	TOTAL
1. System Reference					
State funds					
CLSA					
Other					
Federal funds					
LSCA					
Other					
Fees, fines, charges					
Gifts, private grants					
Local sources					
Reserves					
Total					
2. Communications					
State funds					
CLSA					
Other					
Federal funds					
LSCA					
Other					
Fees, fines, charges					
Gifts, private grants					
Local sources					
Reserves					

Workload Measures

As workload data are currently collected, there appears to be some confusion as to whether extensiveness or effectiveness of service is being measured.

Because the current count asks for the number of questions answered, an effectiveness measure, it underestimates the total staff workload (extensiveness). A System staff member may work as long or longer on a question which may then be referred to BARC or SCAN than on one that can be answered from System resources. Both kinds of information are useful. We recommend that the statistics gathered reflect the number of questions handled (transactions) as well as the number actually answered. One measure of network effectiveness is to compare the number of questions answered to the number handled.

The current workload matrix requests a count based on the location of the answer. The major component of reference cost is staff time. The present forms are ambiguous when, for example, a question is answered by System staff using an academic library collection. We therefore recommend that the reporting categories be modified to reflect who handled a question rather than where the answer was found.

We also recommend that all reference workload data gathered from public libraries be centralized in System reference centers or be coordinated by System reference coordinators. The accuracy of the data can be monitored if the Systems are used as coordinating centers rather than having all data go directly to the State Library. A complexity presently reflecting this lack of coordination involves question E15 in the public library reports which asks for the number of referral questions answered. We cannot tell whether these questions are also counted on the System reports; the Systems themselves vary in whether they try to report these questions.

The following matrix is a suggestion of a basic form which would provide precise, useful workload data if accompanied by the directions and definitions necessary for accurate completion.

PROPOSED REFERENCE WORKLOAD MATRIX

Referred Answered	Questions Referred to System by				Questions Referred Directly by Member Libraries to
Number of Questions Referred to and Answered by the Staff of	(1) Member Public Libraries	(2) Non-public Libraries in California	(3) Other Public Libraries or Systems	(4) Total	
a. System reference center	referred answered				
b. System public libraries					
c. Non-public libraries in California					
d. BARC or SCAN					
e. The State Library					
f. Non-library sources					
g. In progress					
TOTAL					

Finally, we found that Systems regularly fail to submit the required statistical reports on time. We suggest that State funds be withheld from those excessively late. Such a policy might impress upon library and System directors and/or their fiscal agents the importance of such reporting.